18 REVIEWS! RETURN OF THE PHANTOM • ARTHUR'S TEACHER TROUBLES • TROLLS
AMERICANS IN SPACE • WHEN TWO WORLDS WAR • SPACE HULK

EDITORS' CHOICE
LOST VIKINGS, PAGE 80

PC GAMES

PERSONAL ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEMS AND SOFTWARE

November 1993
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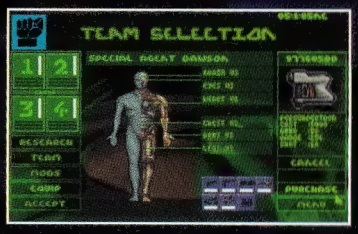

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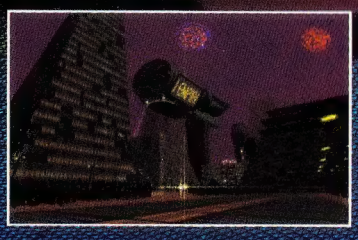
To confiscate a copy of Syndicate, visit your local software retailer, or call toll free 1-800-245-4525. Available for the IBM PC and compatibles.



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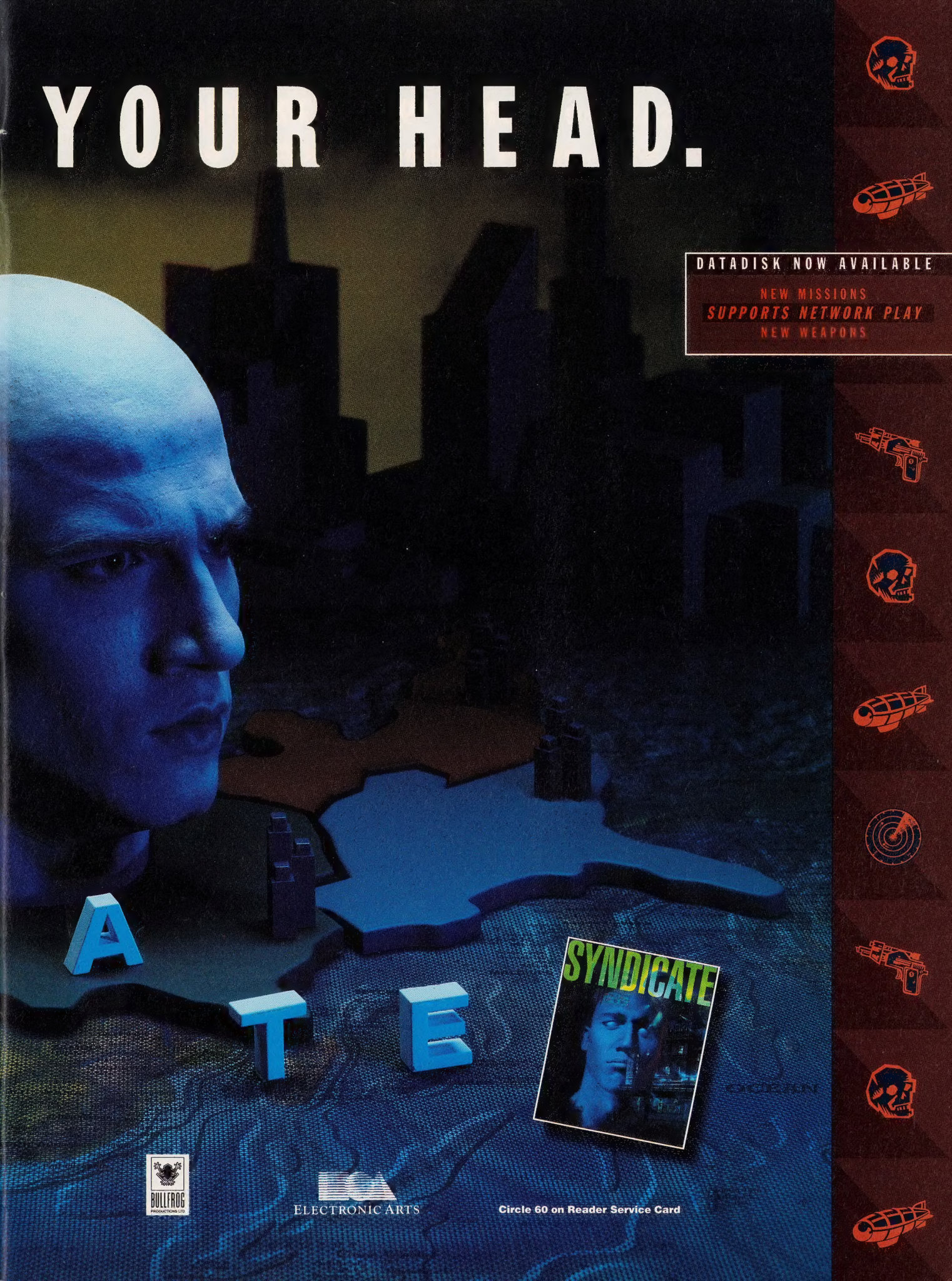
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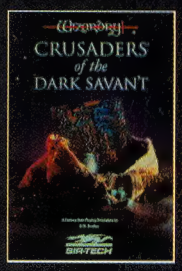

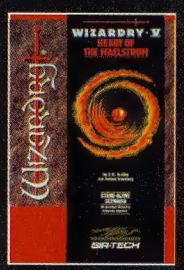

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NOVEMBER 1993
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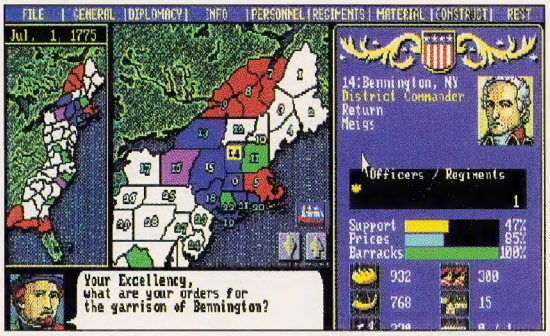
The roots of computerized adventuring can be traced back more than 20 years, to pen-and-paper role-playing games. Back then, games like "Dungeons & Dragons" and "Traveler" offered up combat, adventure, character interaction and puzzle-solving in an open-ended environment. But we've come a long way since the days of gamers huddled around a table. Find out in our cover story just how far we've come, and where computerized adventuring is headed.



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44 **SOMEWHERE IN TIME** By Wayne Kawamoto
The PC is a virtual time machine that can return you to ages long-gone to recreate – and even change – the course of history. Within the safe world of the PC, you can match yourself against history's best, beat them at their own game, and avoid their stupid mistakes. Here are five games that turn your PC into a time warp that you control.

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EDITOR'S PAGE

NOT THE SAME OLD, SAME OLD ANYMORE

We're in for a wild ride.

Electronic Entertainment – never more than a broad constituency composed of games on home video machines, computers and stand-up arcades – has always been Us against Them. "Video games suck, and anyone who plays them can't brag of being an adult, no matter what their driver's license says. Macintosh games are pathetic, with creepy-crawling speed that can't hold a candle to a slug. Arcades are jammed with brainless punch games where anyone with a twitch can win. And computers? Playing games? With what, a $3000 box? Get real, save some money, and buy Sega or buy Nintendo."

That's the Us against Them of Electronic Entertainment, and Electronic Entertainment magazines. Each constituency plugs its own, derides the rest. *PCGames* hasn't been innocent either, for it speaks only of games that play on PCs, ignores the Macintosh, ignores the cartridge-based consoles that connect to the TV, even when those games might be better, faster or more creative.

But, digital entertainment is getting ready for a major change. That change comes from CDs in part, and from cheaper, yet faster, "computers" as well. Compact discs, with their massive storage space and inexpensive manufacturing costs, provide the message of this change, while game players like Panasonic's 3DO Interactive Multiplayer provide the medium.

Besides, PC-based entertainment is but a fraction of the billions spent on arcades, video games, and, down the road, game-related networks and CD-based multiplayer game machines. If the traditional Us against Them doesn't stop, the Them may just turn Us into a footnote in entertainment's history.

That's why you should keep your eyes peeled for the debut issue of *Electronic Entertainment* magazine. Appearing on your local newsstand in December, *E2* will quash this Us against Them psychosis by covering, reporting and evaluating the entertainment spectrum. From interactive television to virtual reality theme parks, from 3DO to PC, from Macintosh to SegaCD, *E2* will pull together rather than push apart. With *E2* in your hands, you'll have a resource of current and future entertainment technologies and products that goes far beyond the narrow focus of *PCGames*.

Much of what you've found in *PCGames* over the past years will find a home within *E2*, since the PC, with the help of CD-ROM, will retain a substantial portion of the digital entertainment audience. But as a separate magazine, *PCGames*' days are numbered. Next month's issue – a beefy gamer's guide – will be its last. Don't mourn the passing of *PCGames*, though. Celebrate instead the wild ride that's ahead by following *Electronic Entertainment*.

I'm going to jump on and join this ride into the future. I hope you will, too.

– Gregg Keizer, Consulting Editor

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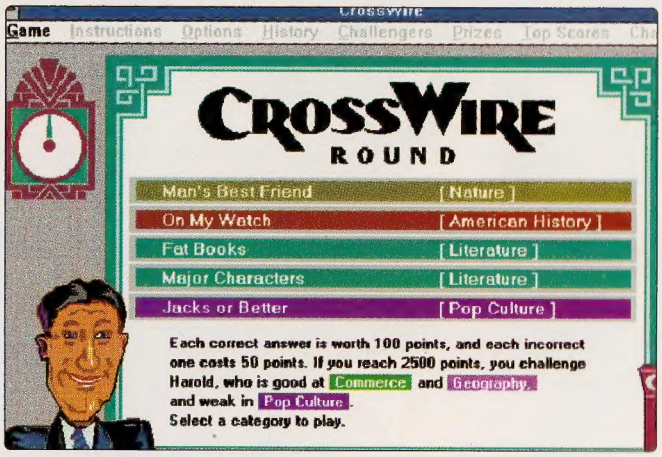
The Senseware™ Company

By Wayne Kawamoto

I'LL TAKE FOODS FOR $200, ALEX

SilverSun (New Brunswick, NJ) will offer **CrossWire – The Knowledge Connection Game** ($39.95). This trivia program lets you test your knowledge in a variety of fields, including pop culture, history, science, sports, and geography with some 4000 questions.

Using a mouse, players try to match clues in two different columns. They may compete against the clock or computerized players, which include a business tycoon, scientist, graduate student, programmer (probably the smartest in this game ... I wonder why?), political consultant, and secretary. With audience sound effects and sappy music to carry the game show theme, the only thing missing is the parting gifts, like that year's supply of Turtle Wax. Come on down, and call SilverSun at (800) 874-5837.

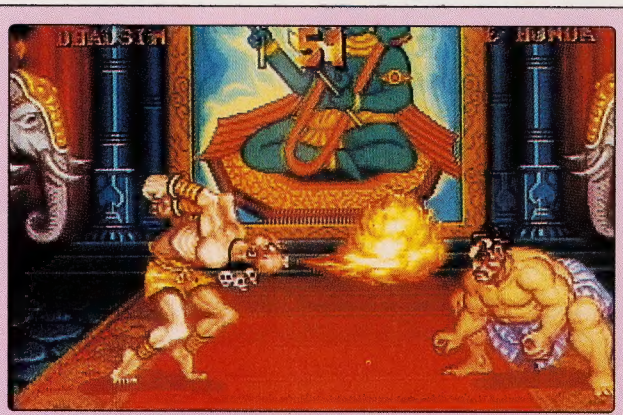

CrossWire
Game Instructions Options History Challengers Prizes Top Scores
CROSSWIRE
ROUND
Man's Best Friend [Nature]
On My Watch [American History]
Fat Books [Literature]
Major Characters [Literature]
Jacks or Better [Pop Culture]
Each correct answer is worth 100 points, and each incorrect one costs 50 points. If you reach 2500 points, you challenge Harold, who is good at Commerce and Geography, and weak in Pop Culture.
Select a category to play.

A trivia quiz show is the name of the game in SilverSun's CrossWire.

ARE YOU LISTENING?

MediaVision (Fremont, CA), makers of the ProAudio Spectrum soundboards, announced two new chipsets that will let PC manufacturers add audio capability to their computer systems. The **Jazz** chipsets can record and play back industry-standard digital stereo sound at sampling rates of up to 44.1 KHz, and are SoundBlaster and AdLib compatible. The chips also support MIDI transmit and receive and joystick ports. Both the Jazz and Jazz16 chipsets are fully compliant with the Multimedia Personal Computer (MPC) standard.

The **ProAudio Studio 16XL** ($499) is MediaVision's first add-in sound card that offers sample-sound music synthesis technology. The board promises professional-quality recording and play-back capabilities on a PC and may be used with MIDI-compatible keyboards. It comes bundled with voice recognition software, a text-to-speech synthesizer, a MIDI sequencer, a professional audio package, and MediaVision's own Pocket Tools. To hear more about it, call Media Vision at (800) 348-7116.



You've got all the moves from the arcade in HI TECH's Street Fighter II.

Ken's devastating dragon punch and Dhalsim's yoga flame are staples for arcade and Super Nintendo fans. Now the action of the arcade comes to the PC in HI TECH's **Street Fighter II** ($59.95). The PC version promises that those popular street fighters will battle on a global scale, using their characteristic moves and secret weapons. For more information on how you can get a piece of the action, call HI TECH at (212) 941-1224.

HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS

You're CEO at MedTech, a troubled $150 million medical company. You're going to have to turn things around, or you better start updating your resume. Such is the situation in IDP Software's (Orem, UT) **The Strategy Game** ($39.95). By combining business basics and computer games, IDP promises a computer simulation that recreates the situations CEOs face today – making decisions and then facing the consequences. The game is unique in that it features ten characters who vary in attitudes and moods. For more on virtual corporate politics, call IDP at (801) 221-9347.

FIVE LETTER WORD FOR FUN

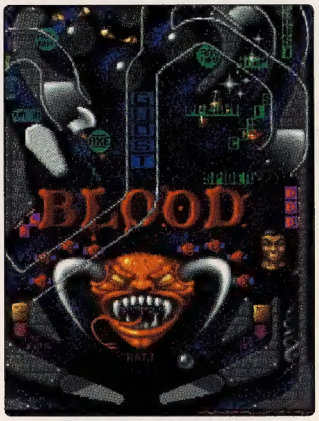
If you want to work on crossword puzzles on your PC instead of in the newspaper, LYRIQ Corporation (Cheshire, CT) offers **LYRIQ Crosswords – The Player's Choice, Premium Edition** ($49.95). LYRIQ's crosswords originally appeared in *The Washington Post Magazine*, *CROSSW RD Magazine*, and *Penny Press*, and range from the easy to the expert. Some of LYRIQ's crossword innovations include a zoom feature that lets you take a closer look at the puzzle, and automatic placement of characters in the correct squares. You can even choose to play against the clock.

Once you're done with all of the game's puzzles, the add-on LYRIQ puzzler packs (starting at $12.95) offer more crosswords. If you join the LYRIQ Monthly Crosswords Club, you receive 25 new puzzles each month. For more information, call LYRIQ at (203) 250-2070.

PINNER

In yet another version of silicon pinball, MicroLeague Interactive Software (Newark DE) will introduce **Silverball**

($49.95). The program promises four authentic pinball games that accommodate up to four players, and offers the sights, devices, and sounds of virtual pinball with vertical scrolling and 256-color VGA graphics. Some of its features include multiple flippers, multi-ball play, drop targets, drop holes, and ramps. For more information on turning the tables, call MicroLeague at (302) 368-9990.



Turn the tables in MicroLeague's Silverball, a colorful and realistic pinball game.

THE SPORTING LIFE'S FOR ME

With a combination of live-action video, sound, and sports graphics, IntelliPlay Sports (Atlanta, GA) offers multimedia sports skill-building courses in **IntelliPlay Baseball, IntelliPlay Football,** and **Tom Kite: Consistent Golf** (prices unavailable). IntelliPlay Baseball covers key baseball fundamentals, like hitting, catching, throwing, making plays, and coaching principles. IntelliPlay Football features Bill Lewis, who leads different sessions on quarterbacking, receiving and defensive and linemen basics.

With Tom Kite as your personal video coach in Consistent Golf, you'll learn about the physics of golf, along with grips, posture, swing, driving strategies, approaches, putting, and trouble shots. To improve your game, call IntelliPlay Sports at (404) 261-8330.

Who hit the most home runs in a season? Who was the opposing pitcher who threw Hank Aaron the pitch that let him break Babe Ruth's home run record ? For enough baseball facts to win every ballpark trivia contest, there's Creative Multimedia Corporation's (Portland, OR) **Total Baseball 1993 Edition: 1871-1992** ($69.95). Total Baseball is a CD-ROM history of baseball with 23,000 pages of statistics and articles, 600 photos, and 20 sound clips of memorable moments in America's pastime. For more information, call CMC at (503) 241-4351.

Access (Salt Lake City, UT), makers of the Links golf series, will offer its first European add-on course disk with **Belfry** ($29.95), the former potato field that's now home to the Ryder Cup. As with past Links courses, Belfry will work with Access' own Links and Links 386 Pro, and with Microsoft Golf. For the latest course conditions, call Access at (800) 800-4880.

POTPOURRI

If you've been squinting at the action on your computer's tiny monitor, Advanced Digital Systems (Cerritos, CA) offers the **Game Blaster** ($169), a card which lets you play your favorite PC games on your TV. By converting VGA output to NTSC video, the card brings the sophistication and smarts of MS-DOS to the boob tube. Game Blaster comes bundled with Brøderbund's Prince of Persia, and Velocity's Jet Fighter II and Spectre. To see the bigger picture, call Advanced Digital Systems at (800) 888-5244.

IntelliPlay Sport's (Atlanta, GA) **Cowboy Casino** (price unavailable) teaches you about various card games. You'll have five personal coaches who will walk you through high-stakes poker, Old West-style. The casino features poker's variations, and explains the odds, how to open and raise, and when to hold 'em and fold 'em. You may even find that your virtual opponents know when you're bluffing. To find out what's in the cards, call IntelliPlay Sports at (404) 261-8330.

Using advanced fractal technology with compression ratios of over 300 to 1, Mage's (Champaign, IL) **Eternia** (price unavailable) offers fantasy entertainment with full-screen 3-D combat. This three-dimensional environment promises that you can feign, thrust, and parry as if you were participating in battle yourself. The perspectives also change when you duck, spin, or crouch. For more information on the latest comin' at ya, call Mage at (217) 355-0401.

A mischievous cow named Ninja Nanny is searching for her heritage while a criminologist named Sherrloch Sheltie tags along. You'll meet these two characters in Silicon Alley's (Beverly Hills, CA) **Adventures of Ninja Nanny and Sherrloch Sheltie** (price unavailable). This CD-ROM multimedia adventure takes you through San Francisco and London, where you'll deal with the diabolical Baron Von Moribund. For more information, call Silicon Alley at (310) 289-1237.

WHERE DO YOU PUT IN THE QUARTERS?

Television's Tom & Jerry are chasing each other to the computer screen in HI TECH Expression's (New York, NY) **Tom and Jerry** ($29.95). It seems that Tom has kidnapped Jerry's nephew, Tuffy, and locked him in a trunk in the attic. As Jerry, you run, jump, and use objects as you travel through the house's five levels to take care of Tom and rescue your nephew. It's an arcade game of cat and mouse.

Delphine Software is now working with Strategic Simulations, Inc. on **Flashback** (price unavailable), a new side-view action game that's something like the breakthrough Out of This World. No, Flashback

Tom & Jerry now play arcade cat and mouse on the PC.

isn't about a spaced-out kung fu expert in the Old West, but about Conrad B. Hart, who invents a machine in the year 2142 that can analyze the molecular structure of any living being. While using his device, he discovers extra-terrestrial shape-shifters living among the world's population. These shape-shifters eventually capture Conrad, erase his memory, and imprison him on their home planet. When Conrad awakes, you have to help him foil the plot to destroy Earth. The game promises puzzles in three different worlds and six levels. For more information, call SSI at (408) 737-6800.

ARE YOU READY?

With more 3-D shapes to depict modern weaponry and animated infantry forces, **Campaign II** ($59.95) from ReadySoft (Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada) is the upcoming sequel to Campaign, a strategy game. Campaign II promises unprecedented control over individual armies, as well as entire campaigns.

Guy Spy is back in a new adventure – **Guy Spy, The Terror of the Deep** ($59.95). With the disappearance of some top-secret military hardware, the United Nations sends Guy Spy to investigate. It turns out that the evil Captain Moray is behind this plot, and he ultimately holds the world at bay with a system of deadly laser satellites that can pulverize key cities. All he's asking for is a trillion dollars (hey, this sounds like the deficit), and he'll spare us all. As Guy

Spy, you have to infiltrate a base, chase down submarines, and find a way into space to destroy the satellites. This adventure game promises exciting fight segments and gorgeous computer-generated 3D sequences.

In **CyberSpace** ($59.95), it's the year 2090 and futuristic street thugs in San Francisco control a computer-enhanced universe connected directly to their minds (now, that's a local area network). In **Dreamweb** ($59.95), the game's namesake dominates future society, and the forces of evil threaten to control it and ultimately control the world. As Ryan, you have to take down the forces of evil and fight for all that's nice (like those things in Norman Rockwell paintings). For more information, call ReadySoft at (416) 731-4175.

BITE DOWN

Count Dracula is loose in London, and it's up to you to track him down. You and six other players (of the live persuasion) will take on six different characters as you pursue Dracula in SDJ Enterprises' (St. Louis, MO) **Dracula in London for Windows** (price unavailable). You'll travel to different locales and explore haunted mansions, and you might ultimately catch the big guy before he catches you. For more information, call SDJ Enterprises at (314) 966-5602.

AT THE MOVIES

From fans of everything from *Birth of a Nation* to *Jurassic Park*, InfoBusiness (Orem, UT) offers the **1993-94 Mega Movie Guide Multimedia CD-ROM** ($59.95). Once you get past the unwieldy title, this Windows-capable program offers some 60,000 reviews, along with film clips and bibliographies. Since this is a full-fledged database, you can use Mega Movie to search for films by actor, genre, and other topics. It also provides information on movie run times, ratings, place of origin, and availability on video. For show times, call InfoBusiness at (800) 657-5300.

PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST AS A YOUNG KID

To help kids express themselves, MECC (Minneapolis, MN) offers **My Own Stories** ($49.95), a creative software tool that lets children write about themselves, their lives, and the world around them. With some 500 graphic images, 13 musical tunes, and 41 sound effects, the program encourages budding young writers to create, illustrate, and enhance stories. My Own Stories lets kids save their stories, or print them to show their friends. For more on writing youthful autobiographies, call MECC at (612) 569-1622.

Bright Star Technology, part of Sierra (Coarsegold, CA), will offer **Magic Spelling Tricks** ($49.95) starring Yobi, a wise and magical character, and Crackers, a smart-mouthed parrot. Children navigate through mazes by spelling words, as Yobi and Crackers help them through the worst of the obstacles. For more information, call Sierra at (800) 743-7725.

For the smaller fry, Europress Software's (distributed by Davidson & Associates, Torrance, CA) **Fun School** series includes three new learning adventures. In **Learning Adventures with Teddy Bear,** kids paint a house, deduce counting puzzles, sing karaoke-style, and practice vocabulary skills on a train. **Learning Adventures with Freddy Frog** helps kids leap ahead with math and sorting exercises, and also offers a typing game in which kids save the frog from the gaping mouth of a hungry crocodile. Last, in **Learning Adventures with Sammy Spy,** children locate stolen treasures by identifying the world's geography (where in the world is Sammy Spy?), add and subtract to help Sammy find his plane flights, uncover dates of historical events, and exchange currency in different foreign countries and at different rates. Each adventure is priced at $24.95. For more information, call Davidson at (800) 545-7677.

Navigate through mazes by spelling words in Magic Spelling Tricks.

Compton's NewMedia (Carlsbad, CA) is repacking and rebundling four of its popular educational titles based on the exploits of the Berenstain Bears. For kids 3 to 9 years old, the **Berenstain Bears Learning Fun Pack** ($39.95) includes **The Berenstains Bears Junior Jigsaw,** and **The Berenstain Bears Learn About Colors, About Music, and About Counting.** To arm your computer for educational bear, call Compton's NewMedia at (619) 929-2500.

Paramount Interactive's **Busytown** ($59.95) is a child's playground offering 12 activities featuring characters from the Busy World of Richard Scarry. You'll find such notables as Huckle Cat, Lowly Worm, Mr. Frumble, and others. Here, on CD-ROM, kids can build houses, play on see-saws and learn about leverage (the see saw kind, not the Wall Street kind), work in a deli, become the wind at the beach, pump gas at the station, bandage patients, and drive a truck. For more information, call Paramount Interactive at (317) 843-5111.

Busytown's CD offers kids all kinds of cute activities.

ALL THE WORLD'S A SIMULATION

Domark (San Mateo, CA) has announced a slew of new titles. First in the pole position is **Formula One** (price unavailable), a race car simulation that's licsensed from the Formula One Association. You race on the world's most famous and treacherous tracks against real-life drivers and teams.

For role-play action, **Citadel** (price unavailable) will offer first-person action in a world of fractal generated landscapes. **Mechanoid Warriors** (price unavailable) will hand over shoot-em-up and strategy play in a futuristic world of battling robot warriors. **Semper Fi – Marines at War** (price unavailable) is the sequel to Domark's Harrier Assault flight sim, and will feature multi-vehicle control so you can pilot the F-18, AV8B, and Cobra Attack helicopter. Finally, in **Test Pilot** (price unavailable), you can take on the world's most exciting and most dangerous job: piloting new and experimental aircraft. For more information, call Domark at (415) 513-8929.

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By Peter Olafson

A WORLD APART

Some role-playing games take a different road, one worth traveling.

You'd think role-playing games would be their own creatures, but they've always tended to smell like what's sitting next to them in the fridge. They started out following **Hack and Rogue,** then they all looked like **The Bard's Tale,** and now – based on evidence from last summer's Consumer Electronics Show – an awful lot of them are going to look like **Ultima Underworld.**

Not everything subscribes to the Underworld standard, though, for several role-playing games strike out in quite different directions. Individually, they may not be the best stuff around, but each takes an interesting direction, tries on something new and suggests lively possibilities for the future.

Terrain. Most role-playing games are dead flat. No mountains, no hills, no valleys, ravines, or woodchuck holes. This would be dull in a flight simulator, and it's dull in an RPG, too. And while some attempts have been made at providing realistic scenery – Dynamix's **Betrayal at Krondor,** for instance – you still can't do anything with it. What good's a mountain that can't be climbed?

A minor-key exception is Capstone's Eternam, a follow-up to **Drakkhen** that may not have the original's endearing oddness and impenetrability, but does forswear that forerunner's pancake landscape. It's the first game with hills – it's sort of like being on the ground in a flight sim – and they're sensibly used. When you get attacked, for instance, a hilltop is a good place to be, for it often offers the clearest shot.

Betrayal at Krondor, one of a handful of role-playing games with a difference, keeps your curiosity aroused.

Multiple players. Because computer role-playing games typically put one player in charge of four, six, maybe eight characters, these digital adventurers are simply different sides of your personality. Until now. Psygnosis's **Hired Guns** permits four players – each with his or her own character and 3-D view – to play simultaneously on a single computer. It's going to get a little crowded, but think of the fun.

Mapping. While pencil-and-paper map-making is a chore, it's an essential one because it involves the player in a game in a physical way, and doing it well has a tangible result. The better you are at it, the better you'll do.

Silmaril's **Ishar** practices a nice twist on automapping. The game has an in-game map, but doesn't show you where you are on it. (You'd have to guess in real life, too.) Instead, it uses an orientation command to indicate your direction relative to the nearest landmark, and relies on your powers of navigation to make use of that fact. It helps you, but it doesn't do your work for you.

Interconnectivity. New World's Computing's **Clouds of Xeen** and **Dark-Side of Xeen** link to form a single game larger that the sum of its parts. What does this mean, apart from a sacrifice of 35MB of your precious hard disk space? It means an adventure – albeit an updated Bard's Tale-type adventure – that is world-sized, rather than the big old islands we've gotten used to thinking of as worlds. As noted a couple of issues back, I think size is overrated, but a "world" should be large beyond our power to imagine, and that's what we finally have here – a place so incalculably huge that you can't actively consider or even imagine the other side. That's real.

Open Endedness. Most role-playing games "direct" players to some extent. That is, they steer us, one way or another, to the next necessary task. It's a delicate balance, and Betrayal at Krondor's mix of direction and non-direction is easily the most successful to date. It offers the player basic tasks, but leaves the periphery wholly in your hands. The game is as extensive as your curiosity is persistent.

I'm well into Krondor, but can't imagine when I'll actually finish. There are minor quests to address, dark places to revisit, graves to dig up, riddles to solve, demons to dispatch, roads not taken to follow into the unscalable hills. I can't imagine an end, and I can't imagine leaving. ❑

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By Cameron Crotty

MIXED MEDIA

Hey! You got your adventure game in my simulator!

Some combinations you just don't mess with. Pizza and beer. Hot dogs and mustard. Eddie Van Halen and David Lee Roth. Down deep, we all know that there are systems that give out more energy than you put into them. Somehow, two (or more) pieces of some puzzles make a whole bigger than the sum of both. The wordsmiths call it synergy.

Back in the late 1980s, a PC game company had an idea. "Let's take a space action game," they said, "and weave a storyline through it. Players' actions will have some effect on the outcome of the story, but it won't be a role-playing or adventure game. Instead, the emphasis will be on action."

A large number of ordinarily intelligent people made funny faces over cocktails and said things like, "It'll never work. There won't be enough action for the twitchy-fingered crowd, and the adventure crowd turns white whenever someone mentions eye-hand coordination." As it turned out, the company was named Origin, and the game, **Wing Commander,** has spawned sequels, add-ons, another game in the same vein (Strike Commander), and a legion of fans to whom the Kilrathi are at least as real as Wookies. Synergy strikes again.

For some games, the illusion of reality isn't as important. In **Wolfenstein 3-D,** for instance, does it really matter who the bad guys are? Wouldn't it be just as much fun to blow away minions of Ross Perot as you make your way up through the Tower of Babel? Most games, though, depend on a carefully cultured suspension of disbelief to make you care about the characters involved. And even though the atmospheric extras take up time and energy, this suspension of disbelief is more than just window-dressing, it's an essential part of the simulator package. You may curse and tap your fingers impatiently, but sometimes you don't realize what you're missing until it's gone.

Wing Commander Academy is the latest game set in the Earth-Kilrath conflict. Unlike most other Origin marvels of software engineering, it only takes 5MB of hard-drive space. No wonder: it's a combat simulator. Nothing else. You sit in a special room, construct missions filled with Kilrathi and Terran ships, and then live them out in a virtual-reality dream that ends only when you die or complete a mission. No more waiting to see what your next assignment is, no more battles against impossible odds, no more clicking endlessly through useless and occasionally ham-fisted plot scenes. Heaven, right? Maybe, maybe not.

I couldn't help feeling a bit lost as I set up missions and completed them in Wing Commander Academy. Sure, it was neat to fly a Jrathek against a wing of Rapiers, but just as there was no storyline to wade through, neither were there any landing scenes or barracks bull sessions to welcome me home after a tough mission. When an Academy mission ends, your cockpit just fades away. Believe me, it's a letdown.

Is Wing Commander Academy a waste of time? Absolutely not. You can set up complex missions, complete with waypoints, wingmen, asteroids, and multiple bandits. There are enough options here to keep even the most avid Wing Commander fan busy for quite some time. Also, I'm a firm believer in the "kick the tires and light the fires" school of combat. I think every simulator should have a way to jump in and go, and most currently do.

On the other hand, it was interesting to discover the value of atmosphere in a game that's ostensibly just action, action, more action. Much as I cursed the interminable bar scenes filled with insipid, two-dimensional characters, I missed Hobbes and Angel, and the rest of the Wing Commander universe.

Like its Origin forerunners, Strike Commander blends adventure and action into an unbeatable combo.

Origin promises that the next Wing Commander installment, **Privateer,** will provide even more character development and interaction. When you add in the intense space action that we now expect from the boys in Austin, we may just have found another inseparable combination. ❑

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By Gregg Keizer

MAKE IT AND THEY WILL COME

Watch what kids create when they can hold the results in their hands.

I can never find a roll of tape, a stapler or a single pair of scissors in my office. No, my employees aren't stealing me blind. I work at home, and it's my kid who's the culprit. She's always taking my office supplies and using them for some strange project that involves cardboard, yards of transparent tape, and Liberace's last collection of sequins.

Kids make things. Preschoolers make a mess, although there's probably a brainstorm behind it all. Elementary-aged children make masks, tree houses, secret hideaways, paper dolls, and contraptions that do nothing at all. Middle school kids? They just make parents' blood pressure zip up the scale.

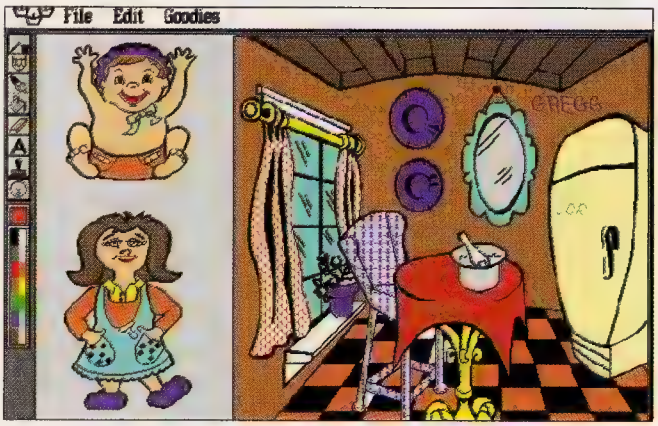
If you have younger children, there's plenty of computerized manufacturing that can keep them not only busy, but as happy as if they'd been left overnight in an arts and crafts store.

KidCuts, a Brøderbund standalone successor to **KidPix,** is essentially a craft kit run from the computer. Like the long-running **Print Shop** (also from Brøderbund), KidCuts lets children ages 4-12 make greeting cards. Like KidPix, this title is a simplified paint program at heart. But KidCuts' projects – pre-designed paper-based creations that kids can color either on the screen or by hand later – are what set this program apart. Ranging from masks and hats to paper dolls and puppet shows, these projects can be customized by the paint and drawing tools before they leave the PC, then when everything's perfect, they print to a wide variety of printers. Helpful hints in the documentation let parents steer kids toward ideas on decorating hats, or putting on the puppet show (complete with tickets, something else you can print with KidCuts).

Another make-it program is Davidson's **KidCAD,** which runs within Windows, the graphical operating environment and interface for the PC. Rather than let kids hold a physical result, though, KidCAD keeps it inside the computer. With KidCAD, children seven and up can build three-dimensional buildings out of polygonal objects. Constructing these 3-D structures is relatively simple, with foundations, pillars, walls, and roofs available for dragging and dropping into place. Additional objects – from furniture to polygon people – can be set inside the buildings, and the walls can be decorated with a variety of designs. Even more impressive, a virtual "camera" lets kids zoom into their creations and shift the perspective.

The Learning Company's **Children's Writing and Publishing Center,** a more cerebral make-it-yourself application for kids, whips up newsletters, not new hats or houses. This desktop publishing program for children ages 7-14 highlights writing skills. After typing in their story and selecting appropriate clip art from the included reservoir, budding publishers can print out formatted newsletters and reports on almost any kind of printer.

Down the digital road, we can expect even more intriguing kids construction kits. As virtual reality comes into its own, and comes in a simplified form to the home computer, kids will be able to assemble electronic environments that they can "walk" through or even "play" in. Domark's **Virtual Reality Studio 2,** an update that's still too complex for kids, is one sample now on the shelves. Even further away will be home-based manufacturing programs that make objects by laying down layers of plastic toner fused by heat.



Brøderbund's KidCuts lets kids make everything from paper dolls to puppet shows on the PC.

While such applications and their necessary peripherals now cost thousands of dollars, they'll probably end up in the home at some point, where kids can design on the PC, then hold the result in their hands.

Maybe then my tape, stapler and scissors will be safe. ❑

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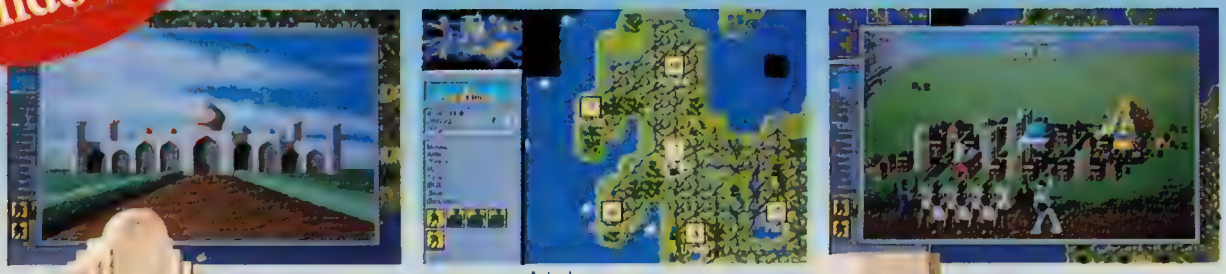

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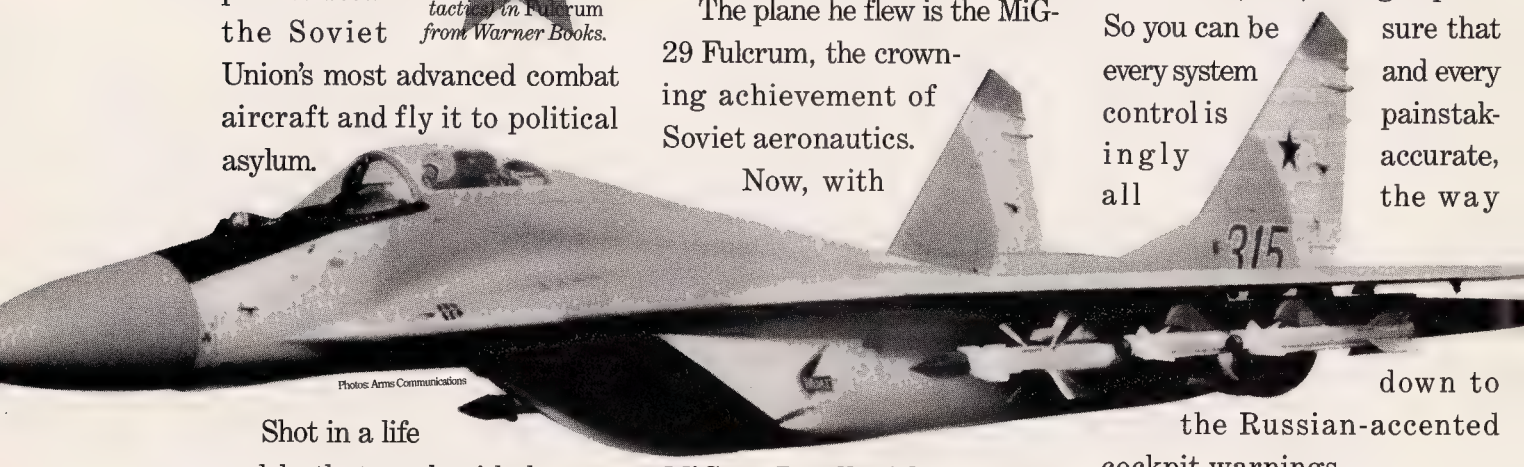

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computer never limits your control inputs, whether inspired or foolish. Its twin Isotov RD-33 engines produce 36,600 lbs. of thrust, to the F-16's 25,000. And superb aerodynamics make it controllable at low speeds and high angles of attack that would have enemy pilots fighting to avoid a spin.

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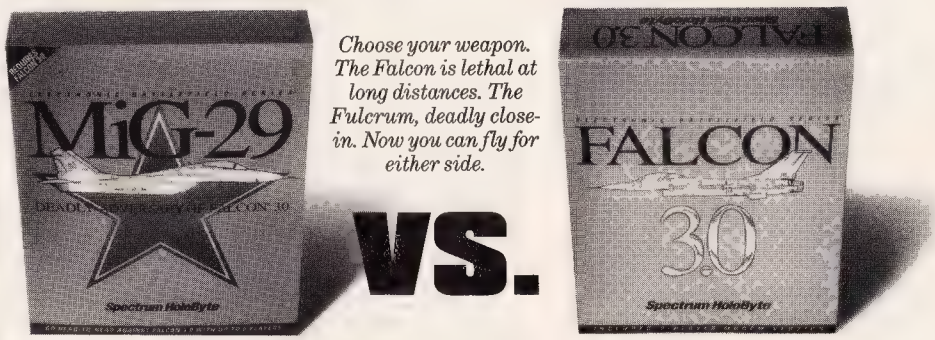

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PCG REVIEWS

NOVEMBER REVIEWS

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Love a great mystery? Get this one. 8

19 SNEAK PEEK: RETURN TO ZORK
Zork returns – better than ever.

20 ARTHUR'S TEACHER TROUBLE
An educational interactive cartoon. 8

20 SNEAK PEAK: RUSTY & ROSY – READ WITH ME
Look out for this program from Brøderbund.

22 SNEAK PEAK: SPELUNX AND THE CAVES OF MR. SEUDO
Welcome to the interactive world of education.

23 SNEAK PEAK: DOOM
Waiting to be dazzled?

26 MULTIMEDIA POOL
Cue up with this terrific sim. 8

26 SNEAK PEAK: MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 5.0
A slick flight simulator for the '90s.

28 TROLLS
A fun and addictive piece of work. 8

30 WHEN TWO WORLDS WAR
The best Empire-building game to date. 8

62 LANDS OF LORE
A refined role-playing game. 7

62 AMERICANS IN SPACE
A CD-ROM about US history in Space. 7

66 DR. T'S SING-A-LONG
An interactive kids' karaoke machine. 6

68 SPACE HULK
A creepy sci-fi action game: *Aliens* revisited. 7

70 CONQUER FOR WINDOWS
A great strategy game for newcomers. 7

71 CLASH OF STEEL
Revisit the European Theater of WWII. 8

75 THE TERMINATOR 2029 AND OPERATION SCOUR MISSION EXPANSION DISK
An adrenaline rush of the highest order. 7

78 WAR IN THE GULF
Command the slow crawl of tanks in the desert. 6

79 ASHES OF EMPIRE
A fragmented superpower needs a leader. 6

Games are rated (1 poor-10 great) on the basis of graphics and sound quality, playability, and ease of installation within their genres.

Return of the Phantom is a perfect pick for beginning adventurers.

RETURN OF THE PHANTOM

By Mark Reynolds

If your idea of an evening of top-notch entertainment means crawling through dungeons and creeping through rules, skip Return of the Phantom, MicroProse's latest adventure. Such high-tech heavyweights need not apply here. But if you tip the scales as a light- or middleweight adventurer looking for some first-class entertainment, or if you're just someone who loves a great mystery, get your hands on this one.

Return of the Phantom isn't even much of an adventure game, at least as you probably know them. Instead, it's more a mystery movie in which you have some control over the protagonists, more of an experience driven by plot than by puzzles.

TUX AND THUMPS IN THE DARK

In this engaging Gothic thriller, you play the part of Raoul Montand, a detective with the French Sûreté (a Gaelic FBI) and opera patron whose evening's entertainment at the Paris Opera House takes an unusual turn when the chandelier comes crashing down on several genteel spectators. As a friend of the manager, you agree to investigate, only to find clues and rumors that point to a culprit who engineered a similar tragedy over a century ago – the infamous Phantom of the Opera.

Return of the Phantom combines terrific animated graphics, an effective soundtrack, and a clever storyline to produce a thoroughly enjoyable story. The digitized animation is always impressively realistic, even stretching towards video quality at times. And although there's very little digitized speech, the sound effects include such nice touches as heavy organ music reverberating through the dark hallways, doors creaking and squeaking as they open, and footsteps echoing in the damp, foreboding catacombs. You'll love guiding the dashing Raoul through the rooms, stairwells, catwalks, and subterranean mazes of the historic Opera House. You'll be impressed with the Grand Foyer's arabesque opulence, fascinated by the dark and dusty clutter of backstage, and chilled by the silence of the stone catacombs.

ADVENTURE LITE – HALF THE FRUSTRATION, ALL THE FLAVOR

This adventure may be heavy with atmosphere and mystery, but it's not a particularly difficult one to solve. Obviously, MicroProse was thinking of the beginning adventurer as it compiled this game.

You can choose from Novice or Challenging play modes, though until you get down into the catacombs, they're identical. At that point, the Challenging mode offers more difficult puzzles and a much more com-

plex maze. Even then, it's still nothing that will frustrate seasoned adventurers. In fact, mapping the catacombs on this more difficult level is the trickiest part of the puzzle, since the Phantom has devised deceptions that cause certain rooms to repeat themselves and loop you back to other areas of the maze. Sometimes the room you're in just looks like a room you've seen before, while sometimes it is exactly that. You'll need some clever thinking to find your way through Return of the Phantom.

There are times, though, when you'll find the game's lack of control annoying. The conversations you hold with other characters are a simple multiple-choice exercise, for instance.

Return of the Phantom makes even ruder breaches of adventuring etiquette. I knew when Raoul chased the Phantom up on the catwalk that the villain would be hiding under that tarp, but as I was about to get ready for the murderous fiend, the game took over and the Phantom jumped out and threw poor Raoul over the railing. At first I was shocked at this cheeky behavior, but after a bit of contemplation, found it fun to be swept up in these occasional dramatic interludes – just like in the movies. Besides, it has to happen that way. If Raoul doesn't get thrown off the catwalk, he'll miss a critical dimension of the game.

Mitigating this tendency is the fact that this adventure makes you immortal. If you do something foolish, like lose a duel with the Phantom, the game pops you right back to where you were before you made your mistake. Nice touch, especially for us rookies.

CASE CLOSED

For a game this well-crafted, its copy protection is clunky. When you boot up the game, it asks you to find and then type in a word from a brief biography, "Erik, the Phantom of the Opera." Instead of asking for, say, the second word in line three on a certain page, though, it asks for something like the twelfth word on line

RETURN TO ZORK

by Joe Hutsko

If Zork means more to you than a heavy metal rhyme for *dork,* chances are you've been around the game-playing block a couple of times. One of the first adventures, the ancient, text-based Zork and its successors eschewed on-the-screen graphics for images generated by the world's most powerful computer – your imagination. Today, with colors rampant and high-res displays de rigueur, text adventures are as extinct as Jurassic's diplodocus.

Or not. More than fifteen years after its first release, Zork returns, literally, in Activision's Return To Zork. And it ain't text, baby.

Is this a friendly face, or what? Return to Zork's interface may not be 3-D, but it is slick.

If you're worried that this reprise may have missed the mark in capturing that inimitable style we grew up on, relax. Return To Zork has all the humor, puzzles, and frivolity of the originals, and then some.

INNOVATIVE INTERFACE

Like a nightmare, your quest begins with one big question: What's going on here? Finding the answer is what Return To Zork is all about.

As the story opens, 700 years after Beyond Zork, you find yourself the winner of a sweepstakes: a four-day vacation in the Valley of the Sparrows. But it doesn't take long to figure out that it's no Club Med – the first sign you see reads Valley of the Vultures.

Graphically speaking, Return to Zork is gorgeous. High-res stills complemented by occasional animated overlays makes for a visually satisfying game, even on the floppy disk version. (The same-priced CD-ROM version boasts digital video of the actors, in addition to the simulated lip-sync found in the floppy version.)

Navigation through this world is less impressive in some ways, innovative in others. Don't expect something akin to Origin's Ultima Underworld approach here – Return forgoes a true three-dimensional perspective for a more traditional connective tissue of one-screen-at-a-time presentation. Still, Zork breaks new ground, for unlike other adventures, it provides an unobstructed, full-screen view of what's in front of you.

Except for the times you'll type in saved game names and copy protection passwords, Return operates with points and clicks. Forward, turn around, left, right, up, and down are represented by arrow pointers when those directions are possible, and commands appear only when you need them. Click on an object to bring up a conditional, floating palette of buttons, where, depending on what you've clicked, the options may include everything from Look At to Take. The right mouse button calls up your inventory, and a double-click on an object picks it up. To use that object, just click on a person or thing.

Talk to a character, and a row of conversation buttons appears at the side of the screen. You can even steer conversations by changing mood from friendly to angry. And there's lots of chatter in Return to Zork. Over an hour of conversation inhabits the game, with each character speaking in a realistic voice.

Keeping track of so much information is simplified by yet another interface innovation: A handy pop-up digital recorder, which automatically records conversations relevant to the story. VCR-style controls make playback a breeze. You're also equipped with an instant camera, that when used, pastes a picture in your photo album. Later, you can use both the tape and the photos to drag more information from characters you meet.

All told, Return To Zork excites, captivates, frustrates, and satisfies old friends of the original Zork, and has a good shot at capturing a huge chunk of fresh adventure meat. That's good, because after expending so much effort – on Activision's part, and on ours – we can only hope that Return To Zork marks the beginning of a whole new series. The prodigal son of adventures has returned, all dressed up and with plenty of places to go.

Activision; 11440 San Vicente Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90049; (310) 207-4500; IBM PC or compatible (20MHz 386 or faster); 600K free RAM (supports XMS and EMS if available); VGA; requires at least 23MB of hard disk space; $79.95

RUSTY & ROSY – READ WITH ME

By Cindy Field

Oh, to be a kid again! Way back when some of us were still linoleum lizards, our most memorable early learning experiences came from TV shows like "Romper Room." Things haven't changed much. Today's rug rats just channel surf to "Sesame Street" instead. But even award-winning TV shows pale in comparison when stacked up against interactive, customizable PC programs like Rusty & Rosy – Read With Me.

A QUARTET JUST FOR KIDS

Created by the Waterford Institute, a nonprofit educational research center, and distributed by Brøderbund Software, Rusty & Rosy – Read With Me is like a four-part TV series. Games in the first segment – the Series 1 package – include Catch A Match and Coloring Box. Here, arcade action and artist's tools help children learn to recognize letters, numbers, colors, and shapes. Series 2 games – Treasure Hunt and Word Traveler – focus on more advanced skills, such as phonics and word recognition. Kids can master each game in sequence or switch back and forth between games.

Space aliens, helium balloons, and sea creatures help pre-readers master letters and numbers in Rusty & Rosy's Catch A Match game.

You can play Catch A Match at different levels: Sea, Sky, and Space. Depending upon the "landscape" you select, the game's background scenery and arcade characters recreate an undersea panorama, a balloon-filled sky, or an intergalactic world. The object of each game is to catch fish, pop balloons, or zap aliens which match a target letter, number, shape, size, or color. As each challenge appears, a human voice provides helpful prompts. "Click on all the little fish," it might say. Each successful try increases your score and earns medals. Rusty, Rosy, and other animated characters appear in each scene, and trumpets announce victory.

Coloring Box is a graphics design program that lets kids explore the world of letters, colors, and shapes. Like a grownup's paint program, Coloring Box offers a toolkit with a pencil (for freehand drawing), a paint bucket (for color fills), a straight line, and an eraser. A stamps-and-stickers tool lets you make geometric shapes and populate your drawings with animals and other familiar objects. When you choose a color from the 15-crayon palette, the program says the color's name; ditto for the letters you choose from the alphabet which spans the top of the screen. The program even laughs whenever you click on the trash can to erase the canvas. Goofing up with art has never been so much fun.

Neither have concentration games. Treasure Hunt, part of the Series 2 package, is a matrix, consisting of as many as 24 or as few as a half-dozen cards. Older kids look for cards with matching letters, numbers, words, or pictures (including road signs) by flipping the cards and memorizing their positions. Younger children can play with the cards face up.

Like other Rusty & Rosy games, Word Traveler talks to kids. "You can make words by clicking on letters at the top," it says. At easier levels youngsters try to make words like hat match a picture at the bottom of the screen. At more difficult levels, children build multi-syllabic words by stringing together a beginning, a middle, and an end.

A CULT FOLLOWING?

Even more impressive, adults can adjust the challenge level of each game for a child. Although Rusty & Rosy will be perfectly comfortable in your home, as many as nine users can log into each game, making the program suitable for early learning centers, too.

Though I only played incomplete pre-release versions of Rusty & Rosy for this sneak, I won't be surprised if these two spunky raccoons attract a cult following among the preschool set before the year is out.

Brøderbund; 500 Redwood Blvd., Novato, CA 94948; (800) 521-6263; IBM PC or compatible (386SX or faster); 4MB RAM; VGA (256-color recommended); Windows 3.1 or Windows 3.0 with Multimedia Extensions; supports most sound cards and the Microsoft PC speaker driver; mouse required; $49.95

25. Are you supposed to count subheadings and blank lines? There were times when I couldn't get it right, even after a couple of tries, and got booted back to DOS. Gimme a break.

Copy protection problems aside, Return of the Phantom is a sit-back-and-enjoy kind of game, one filled with wonderful graphics, music, mystery, and enough dramatic twists and turns to keep you going for hours. Refuse to expect Return of the Phantom to be like other adventures you've played, and you'll enjoy yourself.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9 10

MicroProse; 180 Lakefront Drive, Hunt Valley, MD 21030; (800) 879-7529 IBM PC or compatible (286 or faster); 2MB RAM; VGA/MCGA; supports AdLib, Roland, ProAudio Spectrum, and SoundBlaster; $59.95

ARTHUR'S TEACHER TROUBLE

By Cindy Field

Before you can say Christopher Columbus Day, stores will have their Santa Claus clones up and ready for work. And that can lead to only one thing: Jurassic creatures and Coneheads spilling from bazillions of gaily-wrapped holiday gifts.

But if you have kids ages 6 to 10 – or you work with kids that age in a classroom or library – this may also be the season to upgrade your PC to the Multimedia Personal Computer (MPC) standard. Multimedia publishers have created dozens of CD-ROMs for entertainment and education, but Brøderbund's Arthur's Teacher Trouble is the first that has me enthusiastically recommending MPC systems to the parental units I know.

CARTOONS WITHOUT TV

Arthur's Teacher Trouble, the second in Brøderbund's Living Books series, is based on the popular book by award-winning children's author Marc Brown. This CD-based program – interactive cartoon might be a bet-

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Circle 35 on Reader Service Card

SPELUNX AND THE CAVES OF MR. SEUDO

By Wayne Kawamoto

Kids can smell schoolwork a mile away. You can try to hide it inside a low-tech game of flashcards, or disguise it with a veneer of computerized glitz, but unless you're very, very clever, they'll smell it still the same.

Every so often, though, a program comes along that manages to slyly teach as it successfully entertains. That's Spelunx and the Caves of Mr. Seudo, a kids' game which combines the exploration of Activision's classic Manhole with stimulating and entertaining activities like those in Brøderbund's Playroom. The result is an enchanting and interactive world that tempts children to forget their sense of schoolwork smell.

I'LL TAKE DOORWAY #3

To begin Spelunx and the Caves of Mr. Seudo, kids just open the front door, enter the doorway, and descend in an elevator. From there, they explore the game's caverns by opening doors, behind which are numerous creative activities.

An observatory's telescope, for instance, shows different planets in the solar system, but if they want to look at the other planets, children must subtly master basic Cartesian coordinates. Not the most compelling activity here, but well done nonetheless.

A wonderful music and animation sequence called the Programmable Polka Machine teaches kids how to list tasks in a series, and in essence, introduces rudimentary programming concepts. Players place different dance motions on a timeline, which then control an on-screen dancer who turns his head, kicks his feet, swings his arms, and changes clothes. Press Play and the character dances the actions in order. Using the polka machine's musical side, kids can program sound effects and chords on a another timeline to create a song in the same manner. Press another button, and the music plays as the character dances in time. Yet another timeline program involves words and asks kids to build sentences that funny cat characters read aloud.

A paint-like program offers a digital set of ink stamps – much like in other programs, like Davidson's Kid Works II – though Spelunx adds a twist, for it records the sequence in which the stamps are placed, then plays them back. In fact, kids can also use this part of Spelunx to create simple animations.

Clever science-based activities abound. A free-moving X-ray machine reveals the innards of a bird and what's behind a wall. Another lets kids set their distance from a lightning strike so that they can see the flash, then wait for the thunder to kick in. It's a slick way to show that light travels faster than sound.

A virtual terrarium houses a lizard that reacts to changes in its climate and food. Cool down the terrarium and the cold-blooded lizard turns sluggish and goes on a diet. Raise the temperature, and the scaly guy starts moving and eats more.

Spelunx and the Caves of Mr. Seudo offers creative and educational activities, not hard-core learning.

Other activities let children design and grow their own PC trees by selecting shape, leaves, and fruit, or play a cute arcade game where they catch toast and send it back to a pseudo-Swiss character standing in a miniature Alps.

HARD-CORE LEARNING? NOT HERE

Spelunx's graphics are first rate, and the sound effects and music make the program enchanting. The interface is also easy to learn, easy enough for kids as young as four to navigate the caves with a mouse. They certainly won't need to look at the well-written manual, which is aimed at parents anyway.

Spelunx is educational in a sense, but the emphasis is on intelligent and entertaining activities with a purpose. Kids will enjoy this one, and maybe even leave the computer with some skills they didn't have before.

Somewhere between entertaining fluff and hardcore education, Spelunx and the Caves of Mr. Seudo captivates kids in an exploratory adventure.

Brøderbund Software; 500 Redwood Boulevard, Novato, CA 94948-6121; (415)382-4700; IBM PC or compatible (386SX or faster); 640K RAM; VGA; DOS 3.1 or later; mouse recommended; $34.95

ter description – helps youngsters improve reading and spelling skills as they explore a sound- and action-packed universe.

Brøderbund has cleverly transformed the story of mousy Arthur's interactions with his fellow third graders and their taskmaster teacher Mr. Ratburn into a bilingual adventure that's fun for children and parents alike. From an easy-to-click main menu, you can have the story read aloud, or you can play inside the story. Either way, real voices provide narration in English or Spanish. But that's just for starters.

In "Read to Me" mode, the story proceeds scene by scene as the narrator tells the tale of Arthur's preparing for the school spell-a-thon. As each word or phrase is spoken, the accompanying text is highlighted on the screen. The pacing is slow and deliberate, which makes it easy for kids to follow along. Visual fades between scenes provide interludes during which the system loads graphics and other resources into the PC's memory.

The dialog in each scene is spoken by the story's animated characters in their own childlike voices. You listen as Arthur expresses impatience with kid sister D.W.'s taunts about Mr. Ratburn's homework assignments. Or hear whiny Prunella or The (overconfident) Brain boast of their respective accomplishments. Of course, you need an audio card inside your PC to hear all this. (Strange enough, though the program's specifications don't list the Disney Sound Source, a low-end audio device, it played dialog, sound effects, and musical clips surprisingly well.)

In "Let Me Play" mode, kids turn each page themselves by clicking on symbols at the bottom of the screen. They can also click on each word for review, or on one of the countless buttons or "hot spots" hidden in each scene. Click on a word or phrase, and the narrator pronounces it. Click on the story's characters, and they talk. But when you click on an object, it comes to life. Among the story's

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Circle 148 on Reader Service Card

DOOM

By Peter Olafson

Such was the emotional torque generated by last year's Wolfenstein 3-D that one could be forgiven for not immediately noticing that it was basically just a wonderful maze 'n' mayhem game. The environment, slick as it may have been, was standardized and essentially passive – there was a sort of gorgeous generic quality about it. And it's not surprising that it was quickly pounced on by a number of enterprising editor-makers and reduced to a construction set.

Prepared to be dazzled big-time. Unlike Wolfenstein's Spear of Destiny, Doom isn't simply more of a good thing: It's a whole new deal, and far more real than it is slick. Id Software's self-distributed follow up to Wolfenstein – which should be available in its initial, shareware rendition by the time you read this – will put any notions of slickness and passivity right out of your mind.

Kapow! Take that, you stinkin' alien! From the makers of Wolfenstein 3-D, Doom will blow you away.

REAL PLACES THAT GET REALLY DARK

Not that the basic game play will be that different. From what I could tell from the far-from-finished version I had in hand, Doom preserves the elemental ingredients that made Wolfenstein the quintessential 3-D action game for the early '90s. Like its forerunner, Doom scrolls with the reckless speed of the pursued, even in its new full-screen mode, and runs under command of a handful of keys. You'll still be dealing hot death, this time to aliens invading a research station, as you collect the leftovers and look for secret areas. (A new feature you'll find useful is auto-mapping – more in the fashion of a rough blueprint than Ultima Underworld's annotatable parchments.) And the Schwartzenegger-like array of weapons remains – though they're more sharply rendered and now bob slightly as you move.

But the environment has changed radically. This research station is built along lines that suggest livable space rather than simply good play value. This is a place, a real place. The walls are almost photo-realistic; it's as if you can touch the cool concrete. Floors have tasteful carpets, and sometimes segments of them rise and fall. Ceilings have light fixtures, and there's plenty of glowing machinery and lighted consoles.

Light was a given in Wolfenstein 3-D. Here, it's a convenience. When I think of the game – and I've been able to think of little else since playing it – my mind invariably drifts back to the doorway-sized slash of sunlight on the concrete wall of the room in which the game opens. I was in rooms flooded with light (and grateful for it), and I was in rooms where I couldn't see a thing. Until I was staring The Thing square in the face.

HEEBIE-JEEBIES ALL OVER AGAIN

You'll note I haven't mentioned the enemies except in passing. That's because I can't really comment on them. Beside the relatively cartoony crew in Wolfenstein, they're a nasty looking bunch, that's for certain – hump-backed, evil-grinned, bloody-eyed. But while the bad guys were in place in this under-construction peek, they hadn't been animated and couldn't fight back. At least that let me sample a huge amount of territory without worrying about my back.

And here I discovered something totally unexpected: Even when effectively empty, there was enough going on in the game to give me the creeps. The place was itself alive enough to create an atmosphere. Example: I wandered carelessly down a dusky, curving staircase into a half-lit cave full of creatures, and reacted instinctively with the let-me-outta-here panic of the superstitious man who shuts himself into a crypt at midnight. If I'd been able to catch my breath, I would have let out a yell to wake the dead.

I can't imagine what Doom would be like populated. Actually, I can. And that scares the hell outta me.

Id Software; 18601 LBJ Freeway, Suite 615, Mesquite, TX 75150; (800) 434-2637; IBM PC or compatible (386SX or faster); 2MB RAM (possibly 4MB in final version); VGA; MS-DOS 3.3 or later; supports AdLib, Roland, and Sound Blaster; $40 (initial volume available free on most BBSs and online services)

dozens of animations are a version of Carmen Miranda, a rather "spicy" burlesque, and a fruit basket hoe-down. Whether it's a club poster on the school bulletin board, a cat begging to escape from the science lab, or D.W.'s teddy bear, virtually every object in Arthur's Teacher Trouble participates in this multimedia talent show.

MAKE THE LEAP TO MPC

Digitized speech, surprise animations, movie-like sound effects, and musical clips – including "The Star Spangled Banner," "Can-Can," and several other familiar ethnic tunes – bring a new dimension to an already appealing story. For enjoyment at or away from the computer, a printed copy of Arthur's Teacher Trouble is included in the somewhat oversized package.

Since Arthur, like all MPC-compatible software, runs from Windows, you can set up an Arthur icon for fast launching, even by youngsters. Arthur played perfectly on a Tandy Sensation!, a plug-and-play MPC machine, although the delays between scenes were somewhat distracting.

On a more-or-less MPC system – a combination of a 486 PC and a Sony

Arthur's Teacher Trouble may look like a book, but it talks in two languages and offers up all kinds of hidden treasures.

CDU-6201 CD-ROM drive – Arthur was tougher to open up after installation of the 256-color SVGA video driver that the program requires. Only by downloading support documentation from the video card manufacturer through America Online was I able to edit my CONFIG.SYS file to avoid conflicts between the PC's memory manager and the new-

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MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 5.0

By Richard Sheffield

Old actors get plastic surgery, old simulations get a graphical going over. Microsoft Flight Simulator, the grandaddy of computer simulations and the title that once was all there was for entertainment on the PC, gets a facelift in its new version 5.0. Finally, Flight Simulator lands in the '90's.

A SHARPER IMAGE

The most obvious improvement to Flight Simulator 5.0 is the addition of stunning 256-color SVGA graphics, and a vast improvement in its VGA images. Aircraft interior graphics are now not only completely different for each aircraft, but are rendered in photo-like clarity, making the gauges and dials a breeze to scan.

The view outside the cockpit is equally impressive. All exterior views of your aircraft, and any others flying near you, are utterly realistic, much better than the boxy filled polygons used in earlier editions.

Version 5.0's improved dynamic weather feature gives you total control over the environment. You can change everything from time of day and seasons to cloud layers, barometric pressure, and temperature layers. Weather settings can be copied and saved so you can create a whole library of weather situations. Thankfully absent are the "cotton-ball" clouds used in previous editions of the simulation.

Another enhancement new to Flight Simulator 5.0 is some decent engine noise: the sound is realistic and changes appropriately as engine RPM climbs and falls. The simulation supports most popular sound cards, from the SoundBlaster to Microsoft's own Windows Sound System. Even without a sound card, though, the internal speaker provides useful information, not just an annoying buzz.

New pieces notwithstanding, most of the features of this update will be familiar to users of previous versions. Though no new aircraft have been added to 5.0, you can still fly the workhorse Cessna Skylane RG, the Learjet 35A, the Schweizer 2-32 sailplane, and the Sopwith Camel. A variety of windows and views can be set and seen simultaneously, which lets you stack a map view on the side of the screen or even remove the instrument panel entirely. Screen layout control remains excellent in Flight Simulator 5.0.

JUST FAST ENOUGH

With all the improvements in graphics, you'll be glad to know that overall performance and screen refresh rate remain acceptable, if only adequate. On a 33MHz 486 PC, for instance, you can display multiple windows at the highest level of scenery complexity without screen refresh rates dropping far enough to break the illusion of flight. The results may be less than stunning, but you can still maintain control of the aircraft.

Strangely absent from this preliminary version is the aircraft design feature, one of the highlights of version 4.0. This feature let you design and test your own high performance single engine planes or gliders, and its omission will be missed. Fortunately, any aircraft you designed in version 4.0 are upward compatible to this upgrade, though they retain the boxy appearance of the older version.

A Flight Simulator favorite, Chicago's Meigs Field has never looked better than in Version 5.0.

Once again, Microsoft won't offer a special upgrade price for owners of previous versions. But the company is providing a coupon, good for a special San Francisco photo-realistic scenery disk for only $5.95, with proof of purchase of version 5.0 and proof of ownership of any older version.

If you're after missile-shootin' hard-turnin' flying that you can master in an evening, look elsewhere. But if you want to take the time to learn something about the fascinating and complex world of general aviation, Flight Simulator is so good that no one even bothers to compete with it. By the looks of 5.0's facelift, no one ever will.

Microsoft; One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399; (800) 227-4679; IBM PC or compatible (386 or faster); 530K RAM free, 1MB extended or expanded memory; EGA/VGA/SVGA; DOS 3.2 or later; supports AdLib, ATI Stereo FX, Microsoft Windows Sound System. ProAudio Spectrum, SoundBlaster, and Thunderboard; $64.95

ly installed driver. Apparently, I'm not alone, for Brøderbund includes an MPC Troubleshooting Guide in each Living Books package. If your system isn't an authentic MPC system – perhaps one that you cobbled together yourself – be prepared to experiment. The effort, though, won't be in vain, for Arthur's Teacher Trouble is even better than its forerunner, last year's ground-breaking Just Grandma and Me.

Sometimes waiting for software to catch up to technology is smart. But with this kids' program now on the shelves, you shouldn't wait any longer. Leap into multimedia – and Arthur's Teacher Troubles – before the year's out.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9 10

Brøderbund Software; 500 Redwood Blvd., Novato, CA 94948-6121; (800) 521-6263, (415) 382-4600; IBM PC or compatible (386SX or faster); 4MB RAM; Windows 3.0 with Multimedia Extensions or Windows 3.1; SVGA; supports ProAudio Spectrum/16, SoundBlaster, SoundBlaster Pro, and ThunderBoard, and Tandy MPC Sound; requires CD-ROM drive; requires mouse; $59.95

MULTIMEDIA POOL

By Bob Lindstrom

For most guys, a good game of pool is just another testosterone rush. Not only is it a "cool guy's" game – dim lighting, smoky air, a cold brewski, and the hearty exchange of groans and insults – but there's a certain manliness about its play. There's the arrogant strut around the table, of course, with cue poised provocatively in hand, and the Clint-like squint as you size up the next shot. Pool. It's a real man's game.

Somehow, walking around the computer wearing my pocket protector didn't produce quite the same hormonal high. But that's about all that's missing from Multimedia Pool, a terrific Windows-based simulation of eight ball, nine ball, straight pool, and bumper pool.

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PURE POOL, WITH A TWIST

A handful of pool and billiards programs, many from Europe, have appeared over the years, all relying on 3-D graphics and isometric points of view to bring some visual vitality to the electronic versions of this game. Too often, though, those attempts were interface-bound products that sacrificed fun for flash.

Multimedia Pool's top-down view may not look flashy, but this Windows title is a solid simulation of a manly game.

Multimedia Pool takes a purist's point of view, for it uses an overhead, two-dimensional display of the table. The Multimedia in its title suggests that Pool might have video clips or other cutting-edge technology, but it doesn't. The multimedia elements seem to be limited to animation and the sounds of clicking balls, audience applause, and a female voice that proffers an encouraging "nice shot" and a depressing "scratch."

With mouse or keyboard, you rotate a cue stick around the cue ball to set up your shot. An optional aiming guide extends a straight line from the cue across the table, helping you determine where your shot will go. In a separate window, you move a scroll bar to dictate the power of your shot and the English on the cue ball. Click the Shoot button and the computer executes the shot.

Since the computer accurately performs all shot set ups, there's little chance of inept coordination screwing up a shot in Multimedia Pool. But because the ball physics are well worked out – particularly as they apply to cue English – the strategy and shot selection aspects of the game are completely satisfying.

Multimedia Pool offers up four modes of play: a self-running demo, a one-player practice mode (in which you can either "run" the table on your own or set up trick shots), play against the computer, or play against a human opponent. Five artificial opponents with varying skills stand ready to challenge your pool-playing prowess. The best of them is very good, indeed.

The same built-in intelligence is invaluable as a Suggest Shot option, which indicates how to play the best shot on the table. It's a great way to learn both mechanics and strategy of playing pool.

Several other options add some spice. In addition to customizing rules and scoring, you can alter gravity (for the Earth, moon, Jupiter, or the humongous Planet X), tilt the table, or make the balls repel. Although these options can create a highly unusual game, they're more novelties than real enhancements.

DON'T LOOK FOR MINNESOTA FATS HERE

Since Windows isn't an optimal environment for real-time animation, Multimedia Pool does seem sluggish, particularly during the break when several balls are moving simultaneously. On these occasions, the balls roll in slow motion, but still accurately recreate the physics of rebounds and impacts.

The 12-page manual concentrates on explaining program mechanics and controls, uttering not a word on technique, so you'll have to bring that to the game on your own.

For wanna-be pool sharks, avid enthusiasts, or Windows-bound workers who need a break, Multimedia Pool rolls onto the scene as one of the best Windows pastimes around.

It's sure more virile than a game of Solitaire.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9 10

Lifestyle Software Group; 63 Orange St., Augustine, FL 32084; (904) 825-4922; IBM PC or compatible; 2MB RAM; VGA; Windows 3.1; mouse recommended; $39.95

TROLLS

By Mark Reynolds

Nintendo may have the arcade franchise all locked up, but the PC hasn't quite given up the fight. Look hard, and you'll find some wild action even on the staid PC, home to more spreadsheets than to Super Marios.

Count Trolls as one of these arcade games for grownups-who-never-grew-up. This roller coaster-like ride of a game sends you – as a purple-haired troll doll no less – running, jumping, and dodging over multi-tiered platforms, chasms, and blocks to pick up baby trolls, balloons, and bonus items.

Visually, the bright, primary-colored objects slapped against the neon background are a trip, and the repetitive background music has the same soothing affect as a middle school's marching band. After an hour or two, my brain was cooked. Just imagine your basic 11-year-old sitting down with a two-litre bottle of Jolt Cola and a party-size bag of SweeTarts for an afternoon's entertainment in front of this audio/visual fry-o-lator. Have mercy!

Okay, so maybe this game did send me to bed with still-shimmering scenes playing out in the dark. I shouldn't have stayed up so late anyway, but then that's the point: Trolls is a fun, and addictive, piece of work.

THE KOOKS OF HAZARD

Trolls cranks up when you choose a doorway and head into one of the game's seven lands. Each land is further divided into three areas. On entering each area, you're told how many baby trolls you must find before you leave. There are always more

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babies than you actually need, but they're not easy to get: They're lost down in tunnels or up on platforms high over your head, all of them crying for their mommas. Collect the required number of babies and you've got to find the Pigstop, the one exit from this crazy place, where the cigar-smoking mythological winged beast, Pigasus, will come and carry you safely away.

As you might expect from a game more likely to call the Super Nintendo home, there are also zany monsters and bouncing, rolling, flying hazards to make your task even more challenging. Look out for stuff like the electric eels, flying markers, marching toy soldiers, and paper airplanes that'll cut your life short. But there are plenty of bonus items to pick up along the way. Break the balloons to see what's inside: Most of the time they contain bonus points, but sometimes you get an extra heart (for extended life), a yo-yo you can use to klonk off your enemies or to swing onto upper platforms, or even wings or springy shoes that really get you some air time. Just watch out for the glass of beer, or the ball and chain that sometimes pop out – you'd better not drink and dive in this game, and bondage is definitely bogus.

Jump on that red balloon and hope there's one of those killer yo-yos inside!

All you have to do is collect the required number of baby trolls, but what's the point of an arcade game unless you can rack up tons of bonus points? Besides, you get an extra life for every 5,000 points, and those lives can come in handy.

PASS THE SWEETARTS

Besides collecting the baby trolls, the big challenge – and most of the fun – is figuring out how to get around the various Troll lands. Each area is a vast, complex maze of pits, platforms, runways and inclines, but the screen only shows you a small piece at a time. You might see lots of babies and bonus items on a level high above you, but how to get there? Jump to the next screen, and maybe you'll find a way up. Make sure you remember the pieces to the puzzle that you've seen on each screen, and just as important, where the hazards are and how to avoid them.

Trolls is some of the best arcade action you'll find on the PC. It's full of eye-zapping graphics, mind-numbing music, reflex-stretching movement, and brain-twisting strategy. If you like Super Mario Brothers, you're gonna love Trolls.

Just remember, kids, before you sit down with the Jolt and SweeTarts, make sure you've finished your breakfast of Lucky Charms or Coco Puffs first. You're gonna need that sugar to stay up with this one.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9 10

IntraCorp Inc.; 7200 NW 19th St., Miami, FL 33126; (800) 468-7226; IBM PC or compatible; 640K RAM, EGA/VGA/MCGA; supports AdLib and SoundBlaster; $44.95

WHEN TWO WORLDS WAR

By Barry Brenesal

When someone eventually gets around to writing a history of computer games, they'll have to tag at least one chapter "The Empire Strikes Back...and Back...and Back." No, that part of the text won't feature black-helmeted villains and terminally cute aliens, but simply endless variations on a single, extremely durable gaming theme: the classic game of Empire.

And when that book hits print, When Two Worlds War will be at the top of the list. This strategy game from Impressions Software may only be the latest in the series, but in many ways, it's the best to date.

THIS UNIVERSE ISN'T BIG ENOUGH FOR THE TWO OF US

The premise behind When Two Worlds War is – naturally enough – a war between two worlds. You control one planet's wartime production and overall battle strategy, a daunting task, as you design and build military units; create libraries of mission programs to explore, patrol, transport, intercept, protect, and destroy; and improve ten technologies to give you that all-important fighting edge.

You'll need to erect Sci-Labs to perform this R&D, and construct mines, power stations, and food farms for material, energy, and sustenance. You'll have to bump up the number of your bases so that you can specialize in different kinds of military production for greater efficiency, and group military units (charmingly shortened to the acronym of MU) into squadrons with distinct tasks.

Thankfully, you're not alone in your efforts. You've got the services of a Westock-Waadam Warfare Workstation at your disposal. This war computer automates all aspects of the conflict and quickly initiates all your commands. (An included glossy brochure, touting the Workstation's capabilities, quotes from sources on more than half a dozen planets in its favor. Valuable testimony.)

The WWW Workstation is quite the high-tech tool. It comes with an 120-page operational booklet, separate written and online tutorials, and a disembodied voice which prompts you for appropriate keyboard (or mouse) entries. There are 42 colorful icons and sub-menu buttons on the

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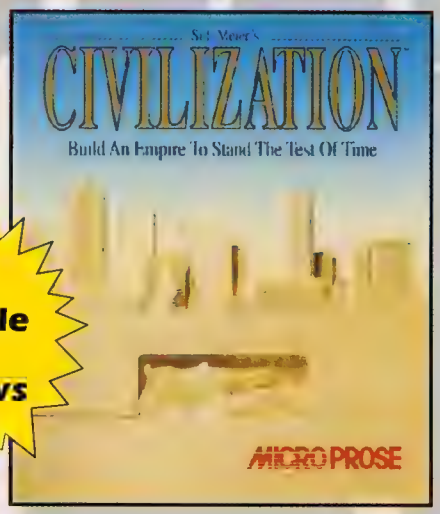

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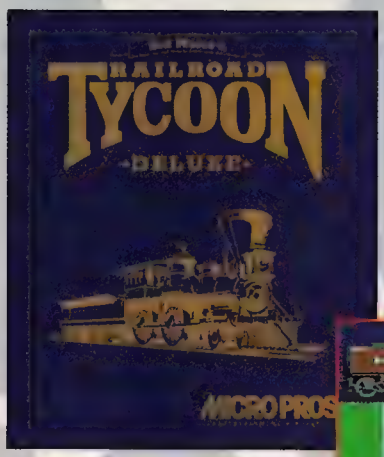

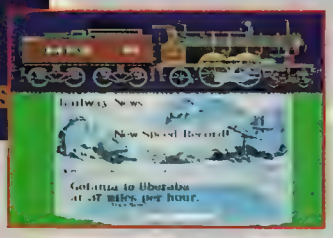

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main control panel alone, and a pair of field displays with configurable magnification (for closeup and distant perspective viewing). An enclosed reference card diagrams the control panel features, and lists the 43 preprogrammed missions included with the Workstation, though these are only intended as models for your own customized commands.

Sound complex? It is, until you start building MUs, deploying multiple squadrons, attacking, defending, and defining a series of limited objectives. Then it just gets lunatic.

YOU'RE AS BUSY AS THE INTERFACE

It doesn't take a rocket scientist – or a planetary ruler – to figure out that When Two Worlds War is custom made for the game player who revels in multiple choices, constant decision making, and a busy, busy interface. When Two Worlds War takes a considerable amount of time to learn, still more time to master, and – with no two games alike – is paradise for the armchair strategist. On the other hand, if you're the type who likes to jump into a simulation and fly by the seat of your pants, When Two Worlds War will have you flat on your assets in no time.

Even the main display in When Two Worlds War is crowded with controls.

Complexity is only part of this simcum-strategy behemoth, however. Configurability looms just as large. Time and again, When Two Worlds War impresses with an extensive series of options that let you tailor to your gaming style. You can play When Two Worlds War by turns, determine how much time each turn represents, play in continuous mode, set the speed at which the computer opponent thinks, and determine its starting resources. You can also play a human opponent via modem connection or direct link.

You can also terraform your own world, and your opponent's. That affects the movement of different military unit types, and the costs for the various facilities that you build. Desert worlds, for instance, are perfect for Sci-Labs, but not power stations, which use water. They're also great for vehicles equipped with land propulsion. Boats don't cut it, however, on sand.

When Two Worlds War's 256-color VGA graphics are attractive, and Aria voice recognition of almost all of the commands are provided, though that last requires a ViVa Maestro 16VR sound card.

The one thing missing from this Empire clone is personality. As in virtually all strategic simulations – Spaceward, Ho!, Utopia, and Overlord are good examples – you fight the weapons and production capabilities of your opponent, but never feel like you're battling a single, unified intellect which periodically mocks, rages and deals. If you're a true Empire fanatic, however, that's superfluous and you should get When Two Worlds War. You'll find that war itself has enough personality.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9 10

Impressions Software; 222 Third St., Suite 234, Cambridge, MA 02142; (617) 225-0500; IBM PC or compatible (16MHz 386 or faster); 640K RAM; VGA; DOS 3.0 or later; supports AdLib, AdLib Gold, Aria, Roland, SoundBlaster, and SoundBlaster Pro; mouse required; $59.95

Continued on page 60

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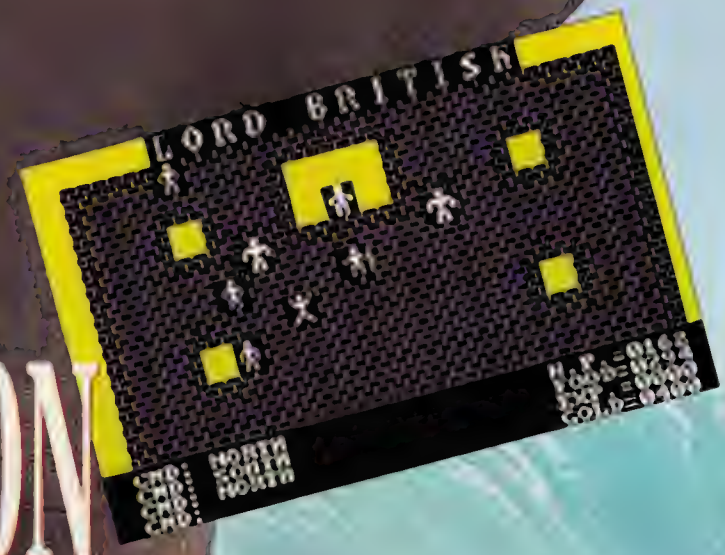
Adventuring, Past and Future



We've come a long way since the days of pen-and-paper role-playing games. But just how far have we come? And where is computerized adventuring headed?

By Bernie Yee

Illustration: Eric Lee

Not long ago, dungeon crawling looked like a strange convention of accountants, Las Vegas craps dealers, and camp-counselor storytellers. Before anyone used cursor keys – much less a mouse – to navigate the treacherous confines of a long-forgotten crypt, gamers huddled around a table, threw fistfuls of dice to sort out the results of a sword thrust or spell, mapped their progress on graph paper, and listened as an umpire-like game master spun out the story.

With roots that go back more than 20 years, these pen-and-paper role-playing games had names like "Dungeons & Dragons" and "Traveler," and offered up combat, adventure, character interaction, and puzzle-solving in an open-ended environment. Like a game of Monopoly on steroids, they could go on forever, limited only by the players' endurance and the imagination of the game master.

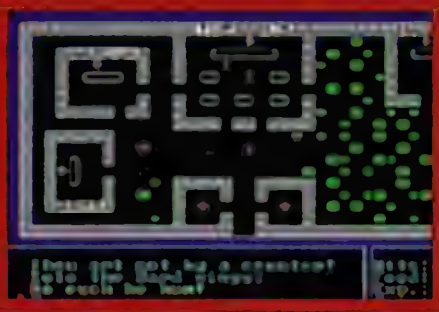
Personal computers are the playing fields of choice for most adventurers today: The hardware takes on the role of map, the program the role of game master. In fact, when combined, the categories of role-playing and graphic adventure games dominate the PC entertainment market, with more people interested in following lines from companies like Sierra, Origin, and Sir-Tech than ever felt compelled to pick up a virtual football or wrap their hands around a digital flight stick.

What's the history of this game form? And it's future? Heady questions, but with a bit of help from some of the creative minds behind the Imagination Machine, we can find out.

IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS THE STORY

You can safely point to a small group of genre-defining titles when you're searching for the beginning of computerized adventuring: SirTech's Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord (the earliest first-person perspective dungeon crawl), Sierra's Wizard and the Princess (the first popular graphic adventure), Origin's Ultima (the top-down fantasy world that's still directed by Richard Garriott, the original designer) and Infocom's Zork: The Great Underground Empire (the first text adventure to understand multi-word sentences as commands). You won't find any of these games on store shelves today, of course (unlike classic books, even the most famous games go out of print). But even if the games are history, their lineage remains, as does their influence.

Follow the evolution: Since Ultima I appeared on the market over a decade ago, the game has continued to increase in complexity, both in visual scale and storytelling elements.



SirTech's Wizardry: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord, for example, was one of the first games to use a point-of-view perspective, where simple-line graphics depicted a hallway running down into the distance, with doors and corridors branching off to the sides. From this format, first-person view and all, evolved games with similar interfaces, like Bard's Tale and even Ultima Underworld.

At the same time, SirTech's first Wizardry prided itself on putting story before graphics, a trend that's seen in the company's continuing line. Its Bane of the Cosmic Forge, for instance, sports an excellent story line but sorry graphics. Not surprisingly, David Bradley, who is single-handedly responsible for bringing Wizardry up to date in games like Bane and Crusaders of the Dark Savant, focuses on the story.

"The artistic merits of a story have always been a matter of the artist himself," he says. "It has little to do with technology, and an artist can tell a good story with primitive technology. But it's becoming more and more difficult for an individual artist to implement a story."

One obvious way to enhance a game's story is to use writers, not programmers, to script the tale. But that carries dangers of its own, according to Bradley. "The writing experience becomes separated from game play experience, and the player feels like a spectator. We need to interweave story with game play." Even with professional wordsmiths, he cautions against expecting too much too soon from writers learning the craft of interactive fiction. "The demand is too high," he says of these expectations. "Look at TV. Has it gotten better in the last 20 years?"

He's just as wary of labeling the future and more than leery of hardware advances. "Role-playing is a nebulous definition," says Bradley. "Boundaries between all types of games should become less noticeable [as time goes by]." And although "faster processors and 32-bit CD-ROM game machines are the most exciting development since the Amiga, they might make a programmer's life hell." Still, he's tempted by the potential. "Three-dimensional technology is great and at same time a real struggle, because what is achievable theoretically is not achievable through today's hardware."

So he returns to the story and the playing out of that story, things which inspired him to create a world in Crusaders of the Dark Savant that existed independent of the player, where other inhabitants competed with the player. "It was an experiment in role-playing. As it turns out, people love to be entertained."

As for the future, Bradley pins high hopes on collaborative, network-run games. "It's a great idea. I love the idea of getting real people together to play a game."

"I get to be a pioneer," he adds. "I'm taking my lumps now but it's a unique experience. As new hardware evolves, the story of Crusaders can easily stand up to a number of incarnations, even if it means fleshing out the rest of the story. Our greatest challenge is the fact that technology changes everything that's possible."

ULTIMA – GOING FOR THE BIG NUMBERS

Ultima I was an ambitious game from the start, utilizing a top-down view to show the hero traveling both above and below ground to visit towns, explore dungeons, and even sail ships. That ambition never faltered. In the decade and more that Richard Garriott has guided various Ultimas to market, he's continually increased both the size and complexity of its world. The sprawling and realistic Ultima VII, the latest in the line, would be virtually unrecognizable to players of the first edition. So would the scheduled lives of its non-player characters, an innovation that the Ultima line originated.

He also has done a lot of thinking about the future of adventuring. "The problem with an open-ended game is potentially that the gamer may be poorly directed, stuck in an unending quagmire of too much to do. The inexperienced gamer will have a difficult time adjusting to the demands of a role-playing game and enjoying it," Garriott says. "Strictly speaking, the traditional role-playing game is not a mass market activity. Meanwhile, adventure games tend to be highly directed, and because of that, the game experience can only last a handful of hours. Since the game events are scripted and the game must lead the character through that script, developers spend lots of money in developing a relatively short game."

Garriott would add a new dimension to the distinction between adventures and role-playing games. Action adventure games ("dangerously close to being arcade games," Garriott notes) like Prince of Persia give gamers visual and audio feedback as to what the alter ego is doing, a kind of cinematic presentation value. Garriott sees

his Ultima series moving towards a correct balance between the three genres, with scripted storytelling steering the player into highly rewarding events in the game, visual and aural cues to clue the gamer as to what the hero is doing, and an open enough environment for gamers to choose their own destiny.

To fulfill that dream, Garriott intends to cut the 100-hour game time of Ultima VII to a mere 25 hours of play for his next effort, Ultima VIII. Instead of physically expanding the scope of the game with larger continents and more cities, Ultima VIII: Pagan will expend its resources making the game richer in storytelling elements, yet condensed into a much tighter package. Pagan, for instance, hopes to have up to ten times as much art as previous Ultimas, while the visual scale of the game will be increased almost threefold.

In that fashion, Garriott hopes to take role-playing games from niche market to consumer acceptance, an issue raised by the planned availability of machines like 3DO and even cable game channels. Until developers find a better formula – and he's betting that his is just that – role-playing games will be unable to penetrate that potentially larger market.

MIXING IT UP IN GRAPHIC ADVENTURES

Even though its now ancient, Sierra's Wizard and the Princess was a graphic adventure very much in the spirit of titles like its current King's Quest, even though the rich illustrations that mark the company's current graphic adventures weren't even a glint in Ken and Roberta Williams' eyes as they labored over the primitive graphics, sound, and storage capacity of the Apple II. Even then Sierra was ambitious, making a multi-disk adventure epic called Time Zone that proved to be premature for the hardware available at the time.

Lori and Corey Cole, two designers who have been long associated with Sierra's adventure games, have driven their Quest For Glory series into a hybrid game niche, creating a unique line that features excellent replayability value, since a gamer can play the adventure with three different characters – thief, fighter, and magic-user. Quest for Glory was also the first Sierra offering that took the traditional graphic adventure approach and added role-playing game elements. Not surprisingly, the Coles enjoy role-playing games.

"These games are going back to what paper games are all about – combat, character development, exploration, puzzle solving, and story development," claims Corey Cole. And the mix they use seems to work. "In a role-playing game," Cole notes, "you can move around and come back to a tough puzzle. Adventure games are more linear. Quest for Glory gives the gamer a number of tasks to accomplish, and he or she can take them on in a flexible order. After all, excitement can't be sustained for a long period of time, and fighting monsters can't be the only excitement for games."

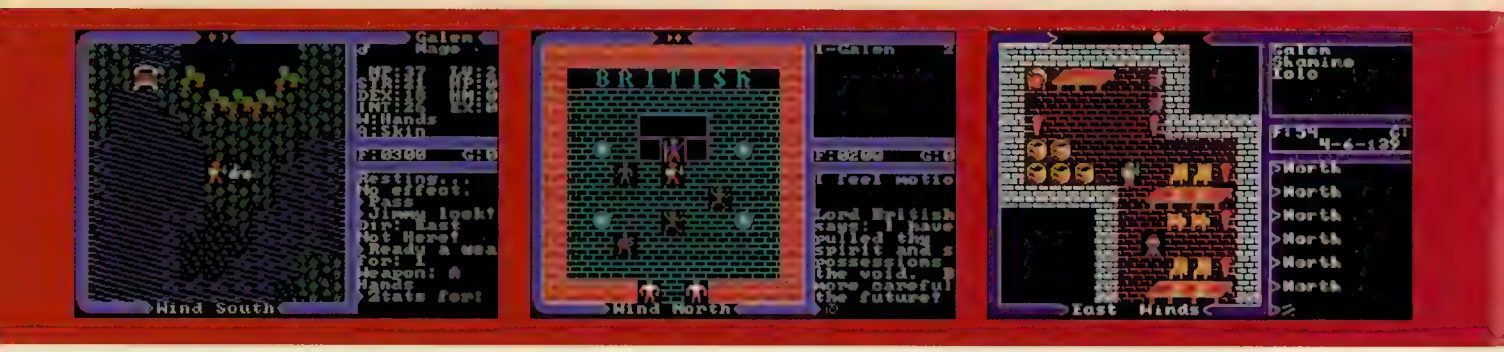
His designing partner looks to more specific techniques to drive adventuring. "Top-down-view make me feel too removed from the game," says Lori Cole. "Real-time combat and first-person views give me a sense of immediacy."

But they agree that the future of adventuring lies in the multi-player role-playing approach of something like The Sierra Network's Shadows of Yserbius. "That's what was fun about pen and paper games – dealing with people, a cooperative versus competitive game. But it's going to be difficult to do a 'traditional' adventure game for multi-player use, if not impossible," says Corey Cole. "Single and multi-user games have different needs, and are different experiences."

His wife predicts that games of the future will work because they'll give you the sense you're playing a real person. "No one has had a relationship with their characters [in current games]. Parties of six adventures have no personality." That's why in their Quest for Glory V, the Coles are going to let the player's character marry, not by giving the player the perfect mate, but by letting the gamer choose the hero's perfect mate from several different possibilities. "Games have grown up and gamers expect more from games," says Lori Cole. "It's not just fairy-tale stories anymore."

AND THE WORD LASTED FOREVER

Of this quartet of early adventure efforts, Zork clearly stands by itself. This all-text game, which took place in parts of a great Underground empire, relied on evocative, well-written descriptions and a complex parser that understood full-sentence commands. Infocom, the company that created and published Zork and its offspring, is gone now, but another company, Legend Entertainment, has taken up its mantle.



Bob Bates, an Infocom veteran, is the president of Legend, and he's brought his distinctive design philosophy to today's adventure games. Bates is a true storyteller, wanting only to be able to make a player laugh and cry in the same game.

Listen to him, in fact, and you get the distinct impression that he's not fond of picture-packed adventure games. "Graphic adventures can only show what they can afford [to show], to paraphrase Brian Moriarty. There's a limit of what you can get a response to [in a graphic adventure.]" That's why Legend leans so heavily on its writing. "The gamer is sitting alone in his studio, it's 3:00 A.M., and he's presented with a particular situation. He tries something off the wall, and the game's writer has anticipated it and responds to it in a funny way. The gamer feels special, like the writer is talking to him directly. A game with five command icons just can't do that."

In many ways, he's right, for the flexibility of a typing interface means that with just about anything a player tries, the game can respond. With text responses, a designer can entertain the gamer when he's doing the wrong thing, as well as nudge him towards the correct solution.

Despite its reliance on text, Legend expects its games to move more toward the graphic adventure end of the spectrum, as evidenced by the company's use of the mouse and its continued search for greater interface intelligence.

And Bates can see the writing on the wall as well as anyone. "Adventure games are definitely getting easier, but I want to preserve some of the joys of classic adventuring without the pain of the typed input. Innovations like CD-ROM should bring lush visual and aural environments, but it won't affect the design of games all that much. I like to start games with a little puzzle with a few locations to orient the player, then I send him into a great big open environment."

Like other long-time survivors, Bates is nothing if not flexible. "I've been experimenting with a new structure: a linear series of open environments. There's a lot to do in each open environment, but you can't move on until you finish necessary tasks."

But he's not so open minded when it comes to puzzles, one of the things that distinguishes his company's titles. The puzzle well's been poisoned, he claims, by adventure games with puzzles that can be solved only by

illogical or arbitrary solutions. "These puzzles discourage puzzle solving after a few tries. We must make the gamer believe that designers will create a fair puzzle, and that the puzzles embellish the story."

NEXT STOP?

There are signs that role-playing and adventure games are coming into their own. Dynamix's first role-playing entry, Riftwar: Betrayal at Krondor, is a stunning game, perhaps the best role-playing game ever, unbelievably bug-free, adding up to a whole synergistically greater than the sum of its parts. The game takes place in a world created by best-selling fantasy author Raymond E. Feist, which in turn was based on a pen-and-paper fantasy role-playing game world. This unique heritage made Riftwar particularly ripe for a computer role-playing game. The graphics are first-person, true 3-D that use a peculiar polygon-based system with texture maps to create a world above and below ground.

But what makes it works is the sense of a "real" fantasy world, where the events which take place feel real to the gamer and further the story. And it's the story which glues all the technical niceties of the game together. Full of well-written prose and atmospheric music, Riftwar: Betrayal at Krondor gives the gamer the sense of participating in a story that allows for choice.

In the end, for all their megabytes, all their digitized musical instruments and 256-color graphics, all roads lead back to the art of storytelling.

Although the so-called classics of the genre are limited by their technological fetters, literature is not hobbled by primitive graphics, and only enhanced by pretty pictures. Just as literature has its *Iliad, Beowulf, Lord of the Rings,* and other works that have withstood the test of time, computer gamers may one day have a required play list of indispensable classics where it isn't the technology that takes center stage, but the story itself.

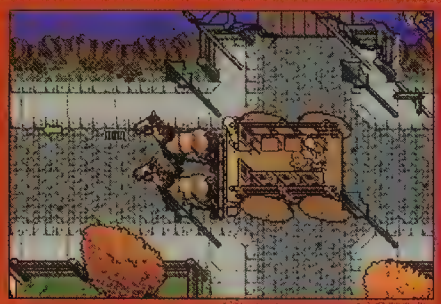
Such themes, echoed by all the designers, doesn't surprise David Bradley. "Look at the classical period of music: Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven. No matter what they did independently, we look back and see that their approach was driven by certain common themes, yet their works are so distinct. We don't look at them as competitors. They all gave us something different and valuable." ❑

STORY vs. EXPLORATION

Computerized adventuring actually includes two distinct types of games: graphic adventures like Legend's Spellcasting or Sierra's King's Quest, and what's popularly known as role-playing games, such as SSI's Eye of the Beholder.

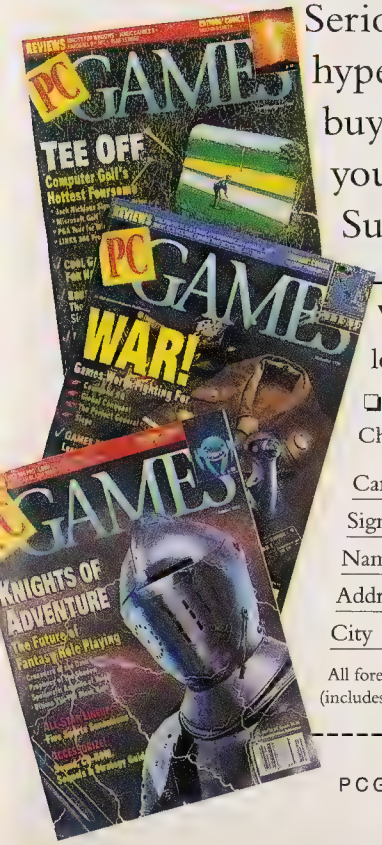
The best way to characterize the difference between adventure and role-playing games is to tag the first as closed story, the second as open-ended quest. An adventure game like Sierra's King's Quest, for instance, gives you a story – and lots of it – complete with plot developments and characters with individual personalities, motives and emotions. Adventure games tend to be linear, tend to make the player follow an obvious path to success from which it's virtually impossible to digress. Get an itch to explore what's on the other side of a lake in an adventure game, for example, and you won't be able to scratch. Nor do characters change or grow in adventure games, leaving you at the end playing a character that's pretty much the same as the one you started with.

Role-playing games, on the other hand, though they provide both character growth and random non-scripted events (such as combat), are different from adventures in that they let you roam almost anywhere in the virtual world. In Ultima VII, for instance, you can move where you want within the vast continent of Brittania, an environment with many realistic characteristics – tides, weather and the passing of time to name a few. Side-quests may or may not be integral to solving a role-playing game; in some, it's possible to finish without exploring every inch of terrain. Luck also is important in role-playing games, for a fortuitous sword thrust might mean the difference between life and death. On the down side, role-playing games are typically hobbled by their inability to provide either a detailed plot or convincing character interaction. – Bernie Yee



Paul McGuirk

TRUTH OR DAIRY



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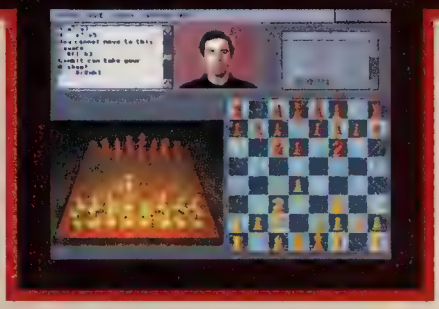


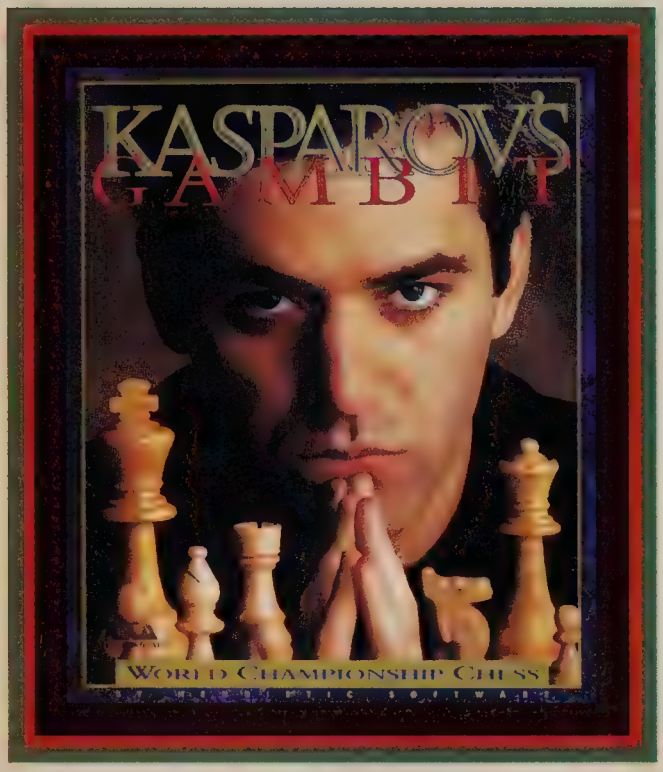
To read Kasparov's mind, simply refer to the second board.

[BEFORE]

Ready to raise your game to a higher level, are you? Meet Garry Kasparov, reigning king of the chess world. And your new private tutor.

While you play Kasparov's Gambit, **his digitized image and voice** (Russian accent and all) will appear on your screen. He'll warn you of imminent danger. Question the tactics you use. And constantly challenge you to seek out fresher and deadlier lines of attack.

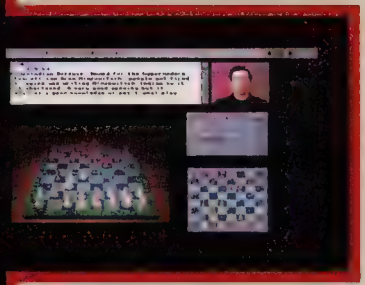
There's even **a second board,** which allows you to **visualize the strategies** Kasparov suggests. You can also customize most aspects of your opponent's game, giving you a virtually **infinite pool of challengers.**



To make sure you don't outgrow Gambit any time soon, we power it with the very same engine that **won** the 1993 International Computer Chess **Championship.** Not exactly what you'd call a pushover. So pick it up. Play it. And who knows?

After spending a few weeks or so learning the ropes from Kasparov, you may just find that you're finally ready to take on, well, Kasparov.

[AFTER]



As you improve, you can customize opponents to suit your game.

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Gambit's engine won the world title, so watch your step.

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Illustration: Eric Apel

SOMEWHERE IN TIME

By Wayne Kawamoto

Don't know much 'bout Genghis Khan, don't know much biography.... Don't know much 'bout Thomas Mann, don't know much history....

History, as the wags like to proclaim, may repeat itself, but when you have a PC handy, you can actually turn time on its ear. Inside the computer, history never has to be the same way twice.

That's because the PC is a virtual time machine that can return you to ages long-gone to recreate, and even change, the course of events. Within the safe – and fake – world of the PC, you can match yourself against history's best, beat them at their own game, and avoid their stupid mistakes.

Do you have the right stuff to make the Cold War-era space program soar? Can you cut it crisscrossing swords with notorious pirates of the Caribbean? Are you able to command armies and outthink the best military minds in history? How about running for President without the press probing into your love life or your housekeeper's salary? Care to play a role in the colonial shot heard around the world, or want to try your hand at walking in the footsteps of nineteenth century emigrants? This is living history, pal, not some dusty, dead prose in a middle school textbook.

In fact, history can come alive – or as alive as is possible without H.G. Wells' Time Machine – when it plays out on the PC. The computer provides yesterday's attitudes, expectations, personalities, challenges, conditions, and culture, and sticks you smack dab in the middle of them.

Arcade duels are just part of the fun in Pirates! Gold, an updated version to a classic strategy game.

No wonder the past is a game designer's mother lode of inspiration. A quick look in any software store reveals a blizzard of titles based on an intriguing moment in history. Here are just a few of the games that turn the PC into a time warp you control.

PIRATES! GOLD

So, ye be seekin' adventure, eh? How about changing history as a disreputable pirate in the era of the mighty Spanish Main?

Like Sir Francis Drake and the "Spanish Lake," MicroProse's classic Pirates! is back with a vengeance. Now updated with Super VGA graphics, Pirates! Gold offers more of the original's exotic combination of buccaneer role-play and wind-in-your-face arcade action.

You develop your unscrupulous career by fighting ship battles, plundering cities, seeking treasure, and making political maneuvers – all in the name of the crown, whether it's English, French, Dutch, or Spanish. You'll get in numerous sea scrapes by maneuvering your ship and pumping cannonballs into your opponent's.

In Pirates! Gold, loose lips don't sink ships, but cannon fire does. When ships get close enough, grappling hooks come into play, the crew jumps on board, and the battle moves to hand-to-hand combat. Pirates! Gold represents this part of battle with an arcade sword-fighting sequence between the captains until one surrenders. The more men a captain has, the stronger he is.

In port, you may choose to attack and plunder the city, or enter the town to recruit men in the local tavern, buy food, trade with merchants, or arrange missions with the governor. If you're successful, you may ultimately take the richest prizes of all – the Silver Train or the coveted Treasure Fleet.

The game's historical recreations let you try your sword in actual historical scenarios with ships, men, objectives and odds similar to the real events. These include Drakes's daring raid at Nombre de Dios (a tough one), John Hawkins' Battle of San Juan De Ulua (with the famous galleon, Jesus of Lubeck), and others.

The graphics are excellent, the strategy requires forethought, and the arcade play is challenging and fun. For those bit by the lure of the skull and crossbones, your ship has come in. Godspeed, and grab a bottle of rum – it's a pirate's life for me.

SHADOW PRESIDENT

They say any kid can grow up to be President (hey, it happened to Gerry Ford, didn't it?), but with a PC and D.C. True's Shadow President, anyone can pretend to the throne of the world's most powerful government. It's all just role-play, of course, but that doesn't detract much from the fun in this intelligent and thought-provoking strategy game.

As president, you carry out your foreign policy while you juggle and control domestic issues. Will you be a Bush and concentrate on the foreign stuff, or are you an LBJ who dreams of another Great Society? Throughout, you rely

CURSE YOU, RED BARON!

Snoopy was on to something when he went back in time to fight the famous World War I fighting ace. Looking at all of the historical flight simulators – Dynamix's Red Baron, MicroProse's B-17 Flying Fortress, and Spectrum Holobyte's Flight of the Intruder, to name but a few – a lot of game players want to do exactly the same thing.

Two notable flight simulators take the concept of flying in the past to new heights by projecting alternate historical scenarios. Instead of merely recreating history, LucasArt's Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe and Dynamix's Aces of the Pacific offer virtual pilots historical tours that, fortunately, never happened.

Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe is set in the European theater in the closing days of World War II. At the time, Nazi scientists were developing innovative and formidable fighter planes in a last-ditch effort to change the tide. Thus, Secret Weapons features airplanes you'd expect in a simulation of the period, along with some that either didn't make it into the air until late in the war, or never make it at all.

You'll find the Messerschmitt 262 jet fighter, Messerschmitt 163 rocket interceptor, Gotha 229 flying wing, Focke-Wulf 190 Fighter, P-51 Mustang, P-47 Thunderbolt, and the B-17 Flying Fortress. Sitting in your cockpit, you can get that rush of seeing an opposing jet for the first time in history.

Dynamix's WWII: 1946 is an expansion disk for its Aces of the Pacific flight simulator. This add-on projects an alternate scenario for the Pacific theater of World War II in which the atom bomb is not dropped. Instead, American troops invade the Japanese mainland to end the war. In addition to new campaigns and missions, WWII: 1946 offers new planes and aces, including the Lockheed P-80 Shooting Star – the USAAF's first jet fighter – and among others, the Grumman F8F Bearcat, Kyushu J7W Shinden, and Goodyear F2G-2 Corsair aircraft.

You may not be able to fly a doghouse like Snoopy, but with your PC, you can change history by flying by the seat of your pants.

on your cabinet members, who report to you on the events and issues around the world, as well as offer advice. The main screen features a world map from which you can select specific countries to examine more closely. Choose a country, and your advisors keep you abreast of events there, each in his or her own area of expertise.

You set the agenda. Do you want to improve diplomatic relations, strengthen economic ties, regulate trade, aid rebels, take military actions, or even assassinate foreign leaders? You can also go for the idealistic goals: raise world living standards, referee conflicts, and try to keep arms under control.

On the home front, you can raise or lower taxes, as well as set the country's budget. As in real life, each act carries its own consequences. Your popularity may leave you soaring at the polls, or your decisions may make you flee Washington in disgrace (or worse, for the Secret Service can't always protect even the most virtual of Presidents).

Your term starts on June 1, 1990 with you already in the White House. Depending on what you do, the world could be a different place by now. (You'll deal with the Persian Gulf crisis as things begin to heat up in Kuwait, for example.) In this game, you can act with impunity, and your decisions aren't even scrutinized by Congress, a luxury real presidents never have. Shadow President gives you access to social, economic, and military facts on 150 different countries, and a 1990 version of the CIA World Factbook comes with the game. The program also provides statistics on literacy rates, population, GNP, world power, and quality of life.

With intriguing subject matter, timely situations, and methodical and stimulating game play, Shadow President gets my vote.

In Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space, a Russian, not Neil Armstrong, may be the first man on the moon.

BUZZ ALDRIN'S RACE INTO SPACE

"We choose to go to the moon," said President Kennedy in his famous challenge. And we did. But getting there was no easy splashdown. There were pratfalls and pitfalls along the way as we raced the Russians for the ultimate space prize – shooting the moon. Interplay's Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space recreates the Cold War space race between the United States and the Soviet Union during a long three decades.

Whether you become director of the space program for the U.S. or the U.S.S.R., your goal remains the same: put a man on the moon and bring him back. In this simulation you develop the hardware and schedule the missions, all the while working within a limited budget. You create the programs, fund space hardware R&D, recruit astronauts, perform flight tests, and then go for the launch. The game deals with realistic hardware and options, similar to those that both space programs actually faced.

You can develop missions in a logical sequence, or if you're pressed for time, choose to skip a segment to fly past your opponent and gain more prestige. Do you launch the orbital satellite first, then send a man into space? Or is it straight to orbiting the back side of the moon? Nothing replaces solid R&D and testing, but when you get behind, do you take chances with hardware that's not quite ready for prime time? Remember, the lives of your astronauts are riding on those questionable rockets. The rewards for risk, though, are great, since success breeds success in this sim. Triumphant missions fill your budgetary coffers, which can then be spent for more hardware and research.

Race Into Space also features video vignettes of actual space walks, liftoffs, accidents, lunar landings, and splashdowns. In all, getting the space program off the ground is a historical and entertaining challenge. The real race was close and with you at the helm, things could go either way.

LIBERTY OR DEATH

The redcoats are coming in a big way, and the future of the 13 colonies rests on your rebellious shoulders. Koei's Liberty or Death takes you to the struggle of the American Revolution, where you can change history by controlling the British forces as Commander-In-Chief William Howe, or try to recreate the success of our patriots as George Washington, Commander-In-Chief of the Continental Army

You'll command artillery, cavalry, infantry, and guerrilla units, build strategic forts, and conduct battle. But Liberty or Death goes beyond the basic military simulation. As in past Koei titles, you have to consider other fac-

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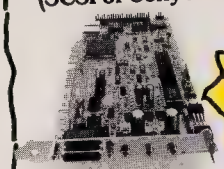

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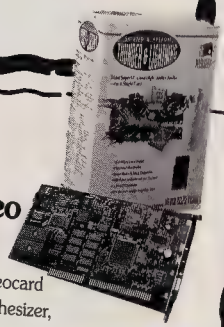

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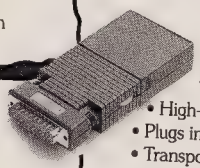

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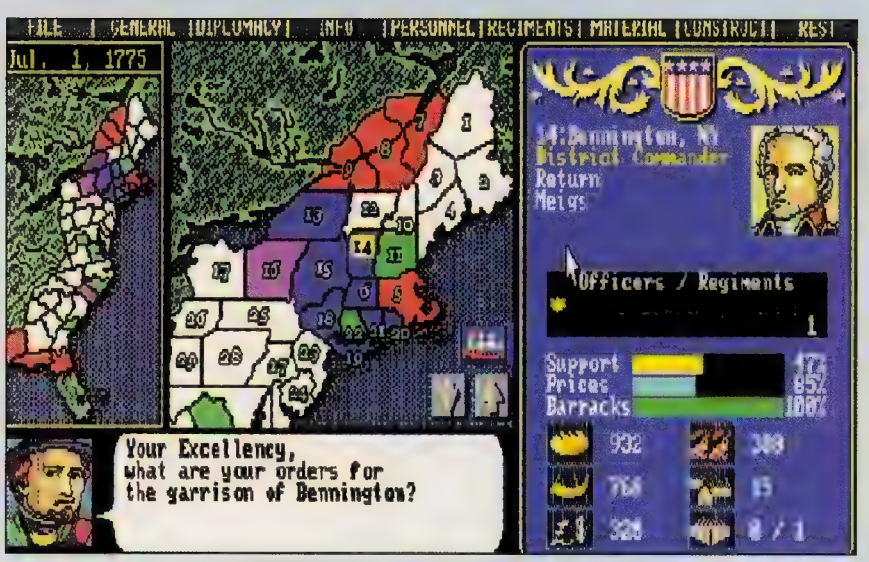
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Support
Prices
Barracks
Your Excellency,
what are your orders for
the garrison of Bennington?

Liberty or Death lets you change the course of the American Revolution through battle or diplomacy.

litical muscle and work with the government. The game features historical events, including the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the Anglo-Dutch War.

As Howe, you command the strongest military force in the world. With plentiful resources, a strong Navy that dominates the seas, and Hessian mercenaries at your disposal, can you make the strategic maneuvers to finish off the resistance? As Washington, you'll start with relatively untrained soldiers as you meet the world's superpower head on.

Liberty or Death plays much like other Koei strategy games, including Bandit Kings of Ancient China and Nobunaga's Revenge. Like these titles, Liberty or Death encompasses a strategic overview of the colonial era, up-close tactical battles, and personalities who carry out your orders.

Koei games are compelling and fun to play, but their historical usefulness is somewhat abstract. But who knows? If you change the history of the Revolution, we could all be sipping on tea, not coffee, by the time you finish.

tors to remake history. As George Washington, you can diplomatically persuade other nations to become your allies (you'll need the French), and deal with potential allies or foes in the revolutionary or loyalist militia, and in the Spanish army.

Logistics play a part, too, for you must keep your troops well supplied with food and gunpowder at all times, and insure that your fighting men are well-trained and can stomach the war. You'll also begin to exercise your po-

OREGON TRAIL

Had it with a no-where career? No, it's not time to consider an exciting move to the medical field or computers

KIDS DO THE TIME WARP, TOO

Ever since Brøderbund introduced Carmen Sandiego, kids have been sleuthing across the globe, through time, and into space in search of this elusive thief and her gang. Carmen's success led others into the edutainment market, a category now crammed with titles for kids of all ages. Three play with history – American history specifically – as they try to teach children a thing or two about the past.

In The Learning Company's Time Riders in American History, Dr. Dread is trying to change the world as we know it. After taking over a key communications satellite, he transmits his own garbled versions of famous events in American history. Using a variety of devices, including a TimeTube, Biodata machine, and Geofax machine, you must deduce the real historic event by determining such facts as date, location, and personality, then transmit the information to foil Dread's plans.

Davidson's Headline Harry has you competing against a disreputable tabloid that bends the facts and misrepresents the past. By going the journalist routine – asking the right questions, traveling, and deducing – you can get the story right, and eventually put the tabloid out of business for good.

Then, of course, there's Where in America's Past is Carmen Sandiego?, one of the Carmen lineup. This time, Carmen and her gang of historical (and hysterical) henchmen are stealing pieces of the country's past. Your job is to trace clues through time, then identify, track, and apprehend the criminal.

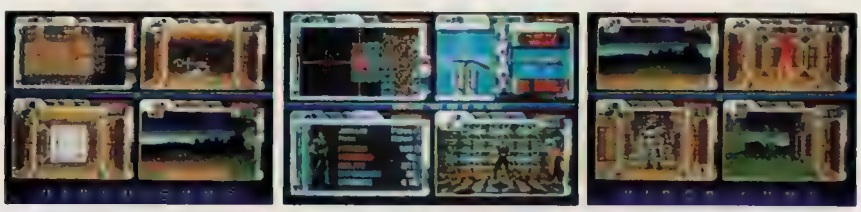
Sitting Bull was Chief of the Sioux Nation and medicine man at the Battle of Little Big Horn.
Sitting Bull saw Lieutenant Colonel Custer and his men die at Little Big Horn.
MALE
ON
BROWSE NAMES
MILITARY

Several kids' games work the past, too, including Time Riders in American History.

TRAVEL TO EXOTIC LANDS, MEET STRANGE CREATURES AND BLOW THEM AWAY!

You've always considered yourself a soldier of fortune with a knack for survival and a thirst for green. Your mission? Anything for a price. But this time it's different. The stakes are a little bit greater and the danger is all too real. You and your team are on a desolate moon, surrounded by less than friendlies, with only one goal besides the mission itself; stay alive long enough to enjoy your newfound wealth.

Hired Guns is an adventure that can accommodate up to four players simultaneously. It features furious non-stop action, first person 3-D view and auto-mapping of the 1.7 million cubic meters of play area. Choose from 12 different richly developed characters to suit your needs for the mission at hand. Journey through this desolate land, all the while testing your survival skills. And remember; TAKE NO PRISONERS!



Hired Guns is available on IBM compatible and Amiga formats.

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(like the ads say on late-night TV). It's the 1800s, and you can – with the help of MECC's Oregon Trail – go west, young man.

Oregon Trail lets you experience the 2,000-mile covered wagon trek from Independence, Missouri to Oregon's idyllic Williamette Valley. In this edutainment title, you'll follow the trail carved out by our pioneer ancestors, making realistic decisions along the way. Before you start, what do you take with you? Changes of clothes are useful for trading with the Native Americans, but you'll need ammo for hunting, extra oxen, and spare parts for the wagon's inevitable breakdowns. (Don't bother to look for a convenient all-night wagon-parts store in the middle of the desert).

Along the way you'll stop at notable landmarks and forts to rest, buy goods, and trade. Food is always a factor, and you'll have to hone your hunting skills so you don't end up like the Donner party. The hunting segments are arcade games where you aim a mouse cursor at quarry. You'll also meet with many of the same hazards

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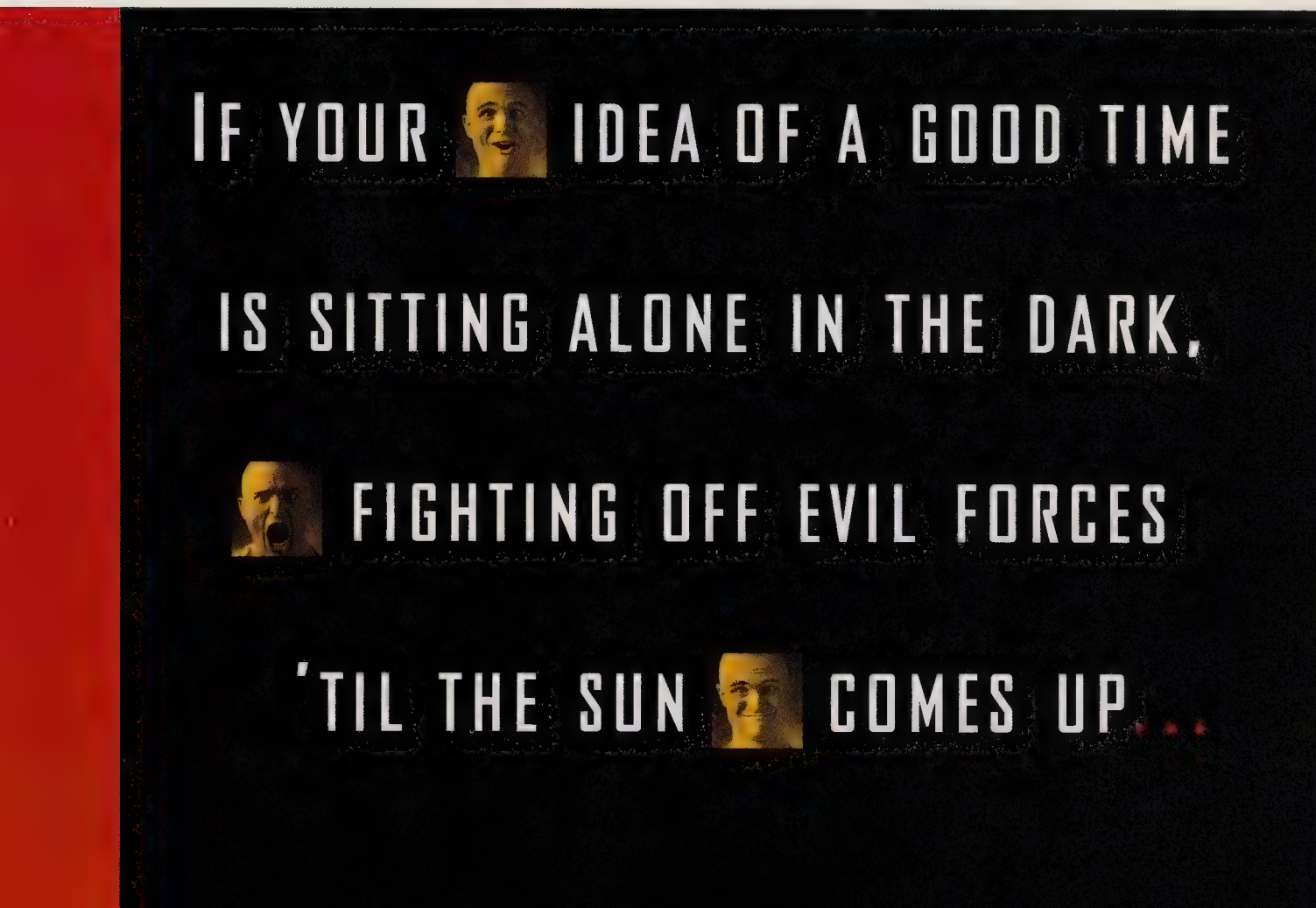

Westward ho! MECC's Oregon Trail has you heading for God's country.

that plagued our pioneers: cholera, lack of water, broken equipment, inclement weather, snake bites, injuries, even death. You'll have to make decisions like whether to ford deep and raging rivers, caulk and float your wagon, or pay for a ferry ride.

Sometimes you make it across, other times you wash up. You can also choose your path – different routes vary in weather conditions, distance, and availability of food and water. A helpful on-screen guidebook provides additional information on various topics and landmarks along the way.

MECC designed Oregon Trail for kids, who can use it to learn how truly difficult the slogan "Wagons west" really was. But it's a snappy enough simulation to drag in the whole family.

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Circle 11 on Reader Service Card

By Wayne Kawamoto

THE LONG WAY HOME

Maze games take you from A to B in every way from A to Z.

The shortest distance between two points isn't always a straight line, at least not when you're trying to struggle through a maze. Then, the path from start to finish, here to there, and A to B is rarely straight and never the shortest span.

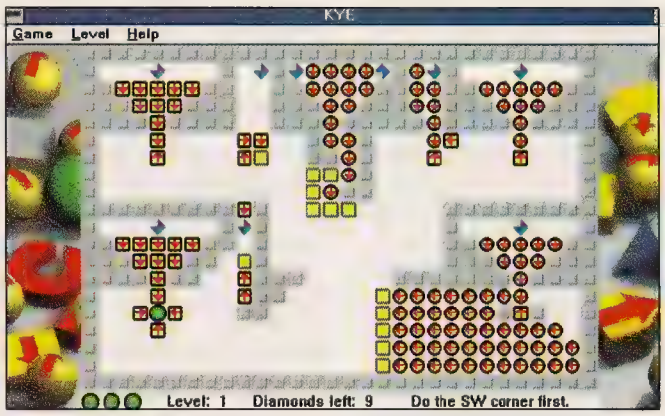
What were once simple paper mazes are now logic and puzzle games on the PC. In these games, you must not only find your way, but you must get past deadly obstacles and opponents, find keys to open doors, and move through one-way corridors, to name but a few tasks. In many games, you're working under the clock, or under a too-soon-executed death sentence. They may not be in the same vein as a complex and realistic war game, but they take almost as much strategic thought as any Waterloo or Gettysburg recreation.

In **S.C.O.U.T.** (Inline Entertainment), for instance, you control a space pod through a hundred mazes, locating, maneuvering, and finally detonating bombs to blow away each level's evil entity. Although the entity doesn't move, you do. You'll find keys to open gates, mirrors to redirect lasers, one-way rails to take you to different areas, and other devices to help or hinder your route.

Other maze games, like **Dognapped** (Froggman) and **Kye** (part of the MicroProse Entertainment Pack Vol. 1), feature similar game play. In Dognapped, you try to save your kidnapped dog from a group of evil robots, while in Kye, you pick up each level's diamonds while navigating around an odd combination of moving blocks and roaming monsters. Trial and error is the key to both games, for you'll almost accidentally discover how to get further through the maze.

Psygnosis' **Lemmings, Lemmings 2: The Tribe,** and **Creepers** are, in a sense, also maze games. You control groups of creatures that mindlessly walk or crawl into danger and towards certain death. In the two Lemmings titles, you move a block of creatures from start to finish by assigning them functions. In Creepers, you arrange ramps, trampolines, and other gizmos to help caterpillars return to their baskets and become full-fledged butterflies.

The most innovative PC maze game is **The Incredible Machine** (Sierra), in which you use a variety of devices – ropes, pulleys, seesaws, conveyor belts, mouse motors, and other objects – to create machines, Rube Goldberg style, as you move through each level.



Mazes on the PC like Kye are as much strategy game as any military simulation.

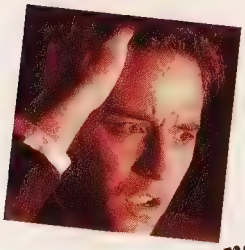
The Incredible Machine may be stretching the definition of a maze game, but at its core, that's what it is. Here's why. Talk to a mechanical engineer, and he or she will tell you that energy is neither created nor destroyed. When applied to The Incredible Machine, this means that energy transfers from point A to point B through the game's devices and machinery. Thus, the potential energy of a ball turns to kinetic energy as it falls and hits a seesaw, transfers energy to the ball on the other side, and so on.

The American Society of Mechanical Engineers may balk a bit at this, but hey, it's only a game. If someone said that laws are meant to be broken, can't that apply to the laws of physics?

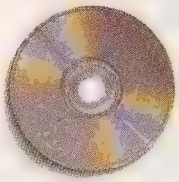
The PC has also brought other innovations to the maze, such as hiding portions from the player. In S.C.O.U.T., for example, you see only a small portion of the maze at a time – the whole is larger than the screen. This means that you have to keep track of where you've been, and where you're going. Another hurdle is that you have to determine the right sequences to find a way out: build a bridge, redirect the laser, take a one-way door into another room, and get rid of a monster to make it out of one level and advance into another.

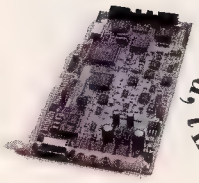
One thing's certain: Maze games are among the most addictive on the market. Like their paper ancestors, mazes on the PC still take you on roundabout routes from start to finish, but add obstacles and logical puzzles, so that finding your way becomes a real adventure.

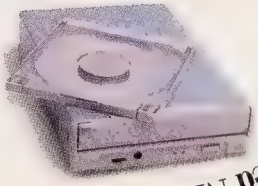
A-mazing. ❑

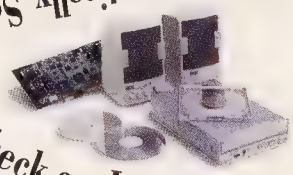


In desperation I asked my friend about turning my PC into a multimedia powerhouse. EASY he said. Just get the award-winning 16-bit stereo sound card, the Pro AudioSpectrum™ 16. Sounds great I said. But he wasn't done. I also needed a double speed NEC CD-ROM drive for superfast performance, a pair of amplified speakers and a bunch of really exciting software. Then for kickers he said that it all should be industry standard, state-of-the-art, fully compatible, and set up my computer automatically. So where the heck am I going to find all this in an affordable package?









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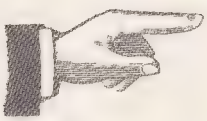

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Circle 34 on Reader Service Card

SOUNDS FAMILIAR

Shout it out with voice recognition hardware.

You've probably heard more than your share about virtual reality, the technology that will drop you – visually and aurally – smack in the middle of a digital environment. It's a great idea, but these helmet-goggles-gloves devices are simply too much for today's home PC.

Another technology, voice recognition, actually holds greater promise for your home PC, and for PC game playing. Already, you can play games where fighting units respond verbally to your typed or clicked commands – Virgin's **Dune 2** is an outstanding example. But what if you could issue those commands verbally, not by clicking keys? It would completely eliminate the need for hand-operated input devices like the keyboard, joystick, mouse, or trackball. That's interaction beyond VR helmets.

The best thing about voice recognition is that you don't have to wait until next year to see what the future holds. You can check it out today. Covox has recently released **Voice Blaster 4.0,** and it's worth more than a casual look and listen.

Voice Blaster comes with a combination headset/microphone, but any quality PC microphone will do. You record up to three copies of any command, which Voice Blaster then "averages" for easier comprehension. Then you attach the command to a typed macro, like A<CR>, where A equals Attack. Next time you play, you won't have to shift attention away from the screen – just yell "Attack!" into the microphone, and the game obediently obliterates the nearest threat to humanity.

With Voice Blaster you can tell your game what to do.

Voice Blaster 4.0 is the successor to Voice Master 3.0, but the difference is more than incremental. It features a new engine which resolves several of the drawbacks of the older product. First and foremost, Voice Blaster abandons its forerunner's incompatibilities, for it is completely compatible with SoundBlaster and its sound-alikes, including MediaVision's Thunderboard, Tandy Sensation!, and AdLib Gold.

Voice Blaster handles expanded memory much better than Voice Master, and automatically loads as much of itself as possible into high memory without prompting. Without EMS, Voice Blaster consumes more than 80K; with it, Voice Blaster occupies slightly more than 21K of conventional memory.

Memory conflicts could remain, however, and some may temporarily mess up your monitor. Be sure to install Voice Blaster's hardware components on a powered-down machine. Reboot immediately if you notice any problems, like familiar applications switching into video modes. Then reload Voice Blaster into conventional memory, and try running your other programs again.

Covox's tech support is very helpful in such situations. Many game developers access memory in one-of-a-kind ways, but Covox can frequently find a workaround that lets you use expanded memory, run Voice Blaster, and fly the skies with a voice-controlled F-15 Strike Eagle.

Voice Blaster's Windows capabilities shouldn't be slighted, even though there are precious few Windows-specific games. In addition to full Windows compatibility, Voice Blaster includes a WaveLite editor for WAV sound files and an AudioFile OLE voice annotator.

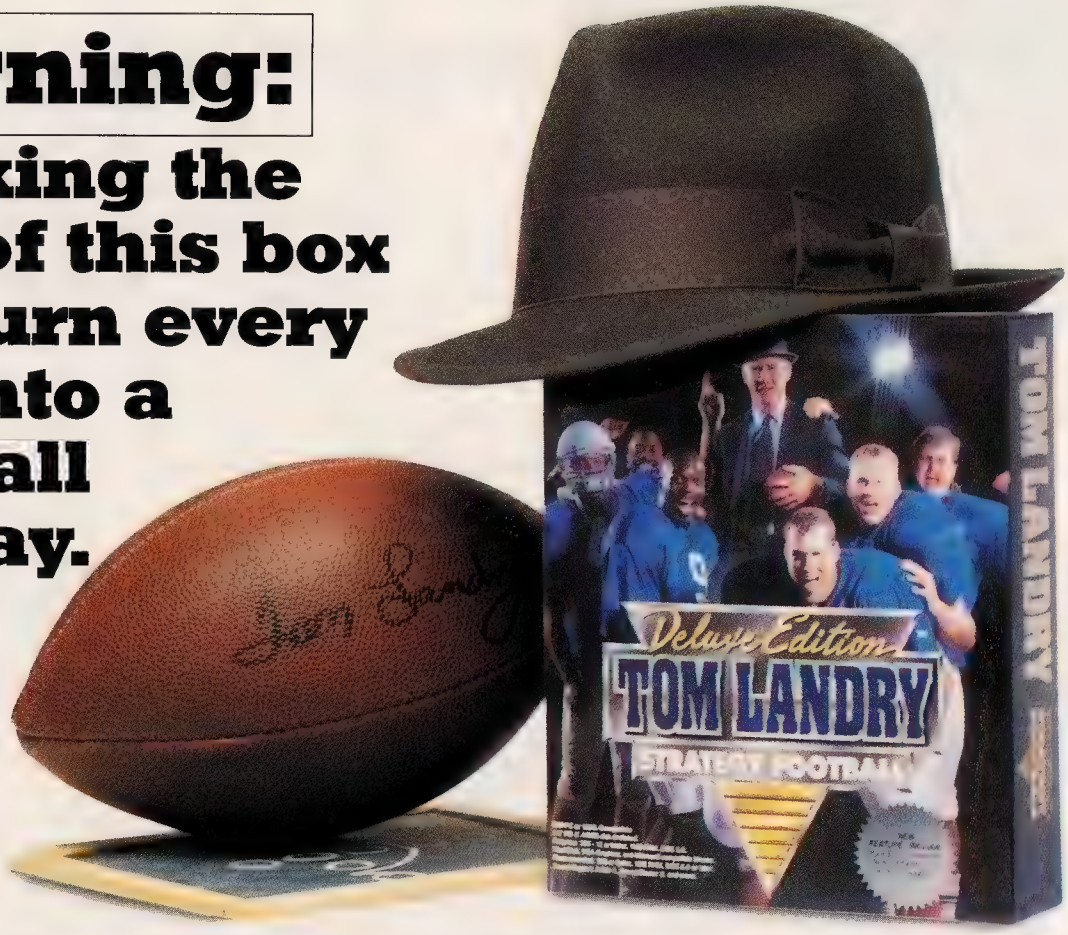
The main difficulty remaining for game players is Voice Blaster's lack of mouse support within DOS – something Covox is working on. In the meantime, you can retool many of your present games that are keyboard-based, giving them complete voice recognition. Bear in mind that doing so takes time, because you'll have to vocally define each game command then type in the keyboard equivalent.

Voice recognition, for all its potential, may not succeed in games without a hardware-based standard, something still missing. We all know the hash manufacturers made (and still make) of Super VGA compatibility. Maybe it's not too late to convene a standards committee like the Lotus-Intel-Microsoft one of 1987, which succinctly defined expanded memory as we use it today.

In the meantime, there remains Voice Blaster and the titles it works with – a glimpse of the glorious things to come in games. ❑

Warning:

Breaking the seal of this box will turn every day into a football Sunday.



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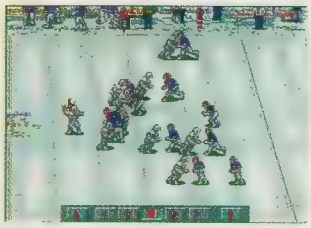

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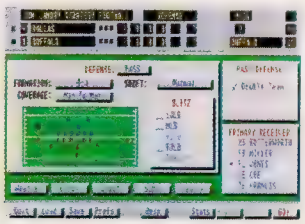

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Circle 67 on Reader Service Card

By Dan Muse

JUST CALL ME COACH

A moving experience with football leads to a coaching job with the 49ers.

One of the few good things about moving is that it forces you to sort through the debris of your life – the magazines, the software and the bills you intended to read, load and pay, but never quite got to. As I packed up my office recently for a move from New Hampshire to California (I still can't comprehend the thought of Monday Night Football starting at 6:00 p.m.), I stumbled across **NFL Pro League Football,** a simulation from Micro Sports, Inc., out of Hixson, Tennessee. The game had sat in my "To Play" pile for more than a year, so the packing got put on hold.

Since two great teams from different years obviously could never actually play one another, I've always been intrigued by software that matches up powerhouses from various eras. After looking at teams on the NFL Pro League Football disk, I started wondering how the 1989 San Francisco 49ers would stack up against the 1986 Super Bowl Champion New York Giants.

Without adjusting the default game plans, which lets you set a team's overall offensive and defensive strategy, I decided to play a best-of-seven series, and got the results I expected: the Giants took the series 4-2. I replayed the series (no home-grown New Englander can stomach a New York team winning), but the Giants still came out on top 4-2.

The third time, though, I used NFL Pro League Football's game plan screen to allow for the Giants' tendency to run, run, run, and occasionally throw the ball – usually to tight end Mark Bavaro. The Giants won the third series, too, but this time it was closer, 4-3.

I was onto something, but I needed to get more involved with the game. I was determined to sweat every play as if I were John Madden himself. My strategy had Joe Montana rolling out for most passing plays – taking his chances with New York's great linebackers. I mixed in a few running plays, but the attack consisted mostly of short throws. My defensive strategy of playing the run and double-teaming Bavaro was working. I squeaked out a narrow 14-13 victory.

My strategy wasn't particularly profound. Many football fans would have deduced the strength and weaknesses of the 49ers and Giants. But, it was more important that I discovered that football is an ideal sport for matching your wits against the PC.

In baseball or basketball games, the coach's role is minimal, so you want to get into the action and swing the bat or take the jump shot. Football games may not have mastered the arcade aspect of game playing the way baseball and basketball games have, but since it's more complex in its play calling, its tactics, and even in its strategy, there's a challenge even if you don't wear out the joystick throwing the long bomb yourself.

Football simulations – I just discovered – let you take a group of players and improve on the sum with a carefully designed strategy. As coach, you're the linchpin of the team, perhaps even more so than in real life, for a botched call here can be catastrophic. After all, you don't have an assistant coach to ask "Are you crazy?" when you think up a dumb idea.

Now that I'm into this coaching strategy stuff, I want more. Sports simulations have used artificial intelligence for years, but I want something more like neural network intelligence, so my computer opponent learns how to coach against me just as I learn to anticipate its moves. And though the strategy is the key, I want to see the results – each play if possible – broadcast with vivid graphics, animation, and sound. I guess you could call this interactive multimedia.

I was onto something, but I needed to get more involved with the game. I was determined to sweat every play as if I were John Madden himself.

My days of looking for football games that incorporate a new way to pass or cover a receiver are over. Now I want to coach the Buffalo Bills to victory in a Super Bowl rematch with the Dallas Cowboys. My game plan's ready – as long as I remember to pack it in the box heading for California. ❑

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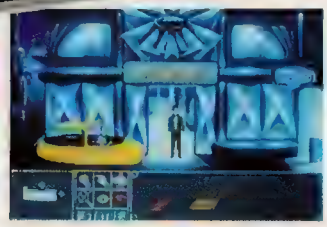

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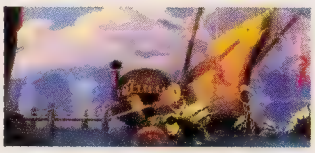
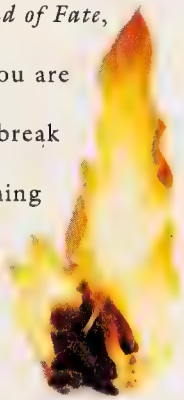
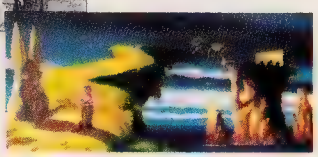
Now you see it. Now you don't. The land of Kyrandia is disappearing piece by piece and all the evidence points toward one perilous conclusion: a curse. Thus begins *The Hand of Fate*, second in the *Fables & Fiends*™ series, where you are the offbeat, young mystic who must voyage to the center of the world to break the spell. Out of sync and out on foot, your aberrant journey reveals nothing is what it seems. Everything is what it isn't. And you can count your friends on one hand. Literally. Conspiring to push the twisted edge of cinemagraphic entertainment, Westwood Studios has designed more puzzles and gameplay in the first few chapters of *The Hand of Fate* than in all of *The Legend of Kyrandia*™. The most advanced graphics on the market are first pencil tested, then painted on-screen to surrealistic perfection. Breakthrough *Trulight* technology illuminates each scene more cinematically for a fuller, fourth dimensional picture. The new *State of Mind System*, along with superior intuitive interfacing, enables you and over 50 characters to change your mind, mood and mayhem based on preceding events. Don't just play with your mind. Change the way your mind plays. Grasp *The Hand of Fate* and kiss conventional logic goodbye.

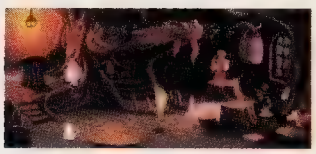






Shadow

Sunlight



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THE HAND OF FATE

Westwood STUDIOS

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Continued from page 33

LANDS OF LORE

By Bernie Yee

It's not easy to peek behind the scenes in the gaming business. Developers keep better secrets than any politician, hold on to programmers with the fierceness of a grizzly guarding her cubs and rarely let on that they're unhappy in their relationships with publishers or distributors.

Sometimes you can get a glimpse behind the curtain. Westwood, until recently a virtually unknown game development group out of Las Vegas, was the talent behind SSI's well-known AD&D Eye of the Beholder series. After Westwood's acquisition by Virgin Games, though, SSI assembled Eye of the Beholder III in-house, while Westwood got set to create its own ambitious fantasy role-playing game for the PC.

Lands of Lore features a refined interface that makes adventuring much simpler.

But although Westwood's first-person point-of-view Lands of Lore shows us what Eye of the Beholder III might have been, it's still an excellent example of what's missing from too many of today's role-playing games.

REFINED ROLE-PLAYING

The engine for Westwood's Eye of the Beholder was hardly original. In fact, the whole series felt like it was lifted right from FTL's Dungeonmaster. In that respect, Lands of Lore is an evolutionary game, one clearly descended from that lineage, although its numerous refinements make gaming much easier.

As usual, Westwood's graphics are first-rate. The interiors of the castle, the forest scenes, the little details like spell effects and the interspersed plot-advancing cinematic sequences are all done in glorious 256-color VGA. A notable improvement shows up even here, however, for while not truly a 3-D game, Lands of Lore supports fairly smooth scrolling. Rather than jumping ahead 10 feet as you move, Lands of Lore smoothly scrolls up to the next position. The effect, of course, is the same – you can only move 10 feet at a time – but it looks much cleaner.

A more substantial addition is Lore's automap. While not as nifty as Ultima Underworld's, the Lands of Lore automap is self-annotating, highlighting the special places you've visited.

Lore's interface is similar to Eye of the Beholder – a point-and-click affair that lets you pick up or drop an item simply by dragging and dropping it to your inventory or the floor, respectively. You access the secret doors and activate hidden buttons within the walls in the same fashion. Other displays also post a communal inventory of items, such as healing potions, show each character's weapons and armor, and highlight the injuries of each member of the quest. As a character takes hit or spell points, that image becomes more bruised and bloodied.

As in Eye of the Beholder, combat takes place in real time, making for a sometimes confusing melee, especially when you want more than one player to use the game's single spell book. To have one character cast a healing spell, for instance, you click on that spell in the spell book, click on the cast button beside the character, then select a power level. If you want another character to cast a lightning spell, you repeat the same process, an unwieldy technique.

There's little tactical complexity to Lore's battles, for they don't go beyond the hit-'em-hard school. At least the game posts less combat than the typical Eye of the Beholder title, a relief to anyone who tired of that line's interminable duels.

WRITERS WANTED

For all Lore's incremental improvements, it still shows chinks in its design and storyline armor. Its puzzles rely on an arbitrary pressure plate-on/off switch scheme. Puzzles exist, not in the context of the story, but seemingly to pose random obstacles to your progress. The story is a simple series of quests, and will probably remind you of any number of role-playing games that have come and gone from your hard drive. And though your characters all have certain skills for combat, magic, and thievery – and each character's proficiency is determined depending on which skill is exercised most – character interaction is rather superficial.

Bottom line, Lands of Lore skimps in places where story-intensive games like Betrayal at Krondor excel. Westwood may demonstrate its top-notch technical expertise in this title, but it also spotlights what's missing from too many fantasy role-playing games: A couple of good writers.

Maybe Westwood will find them, and finally put together a great adventure, not just an entertaining experience.

1 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9 10

Virgin Games; 18061 Fitch Avenue, Irvine, CA 92714; (714) 833-8710; IBM PC or compatible (16MHz 386 or faster); DOS 5.0, 2MB RAM; VGA/MCGA; supports AdLib, AdLib Gold, Roland MT-32/LAPC-1, SoundBlaster, and SoundBlaster Pro; $62.99

AMERICANS IN SPACE

By Bob Lindstrom

Entertainment excitement doesn't have to be fictional. There's plenty of real-life thrills that can come to

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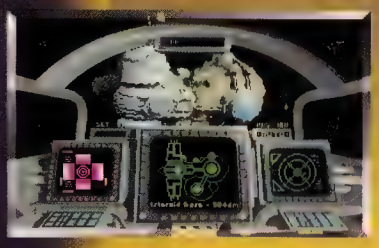

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your PC. Americans in Space, for instance, is a CD-ROM recounting our manned space program, the most exciting adventure of the 20th century. Rivaling any fantasy role-playing epic in scope and matching any graphic adventure in sheer edge-of-your-seat exhilaration, this broad historical perspective includes over 500 photographs and more than an hour of full-motion video.

Most attractive to students – either the young kind or simply students of the space program – this compact disc is a vivid, immediate introduction to America's ventures outside the atmosphere.

Americans in Space may not sport a flashy interface, but its audio and video content is solid.

ALL SYSTEMS ARE GO

Though the main focus of this compendium is America's unprecedented success in putting man in space, the disc actually opens with some of the theoretical origins of space flight (in 1903, no less). From there, it continues through experimental vehicles, like the X15, before it moves on to deal with fully realized multinational space voyages, such as the joint American-Soviet Apollo/Soyuz mission and the Spacelab-J collaboration between NASA and Japan's National Space Development Agency.

There are text descriptions of every manned space mission, often accompanied by photographs, narration and, in many cases, lengthy video clips that let you relive some of the most important events, like Alan Shepard's pioneering sub-orbital flight of 1961.

Americans in Space is organized to encourage browsing through its voluminous collection of information. In the Mission Control "room," you can click on buttons to select events by year, by NASA project (from Mercury to the Space Station), or by individual mission. When you select your topic, a green light appears on any of a double row of icons, indicating whether that topic includes text, video, a narrated slide show, mission factoids and a portrait of the crew. Clicking on any of the icons displays a menu of the available data.

A green light on the on-screen telephone tells you that the topic also has some matching narration. These run the gamut from lengthy de-

Advertisement

scriptions to terse, anecdotal information about each mission. Finally, a Print icon lets you print out the entire text of the topic, while a Book icon provides access to context-sensitive on-line help.

The other "room" of Americans in Space is devoted to five narrated slide shows that deal with general topics: The Race to the Moon, Turning Points, Disasters, Living in Space, and Cruising the Planet. Each is a concise self-contained audiovisual essay that offers solid overviews of its subject matter. You'll particularly enjoy the high-flying, 39-slide travelogue of Cruising the Planet.

While the interface is somewhat simplistic in appearance – most entertainment titles these days are far more attractive – the multimedia content of Americans in Space is well done. The video clips are excellent, the narration quality is highly professional, and the accompanying graphics, mostly from NASA or news sources, are clear and sharp.

LOOKING AT LUNA

For the space enthusiast, this compact disc is a treasure chest of information and memorabilia. You can peruse an annotated photograph of the X-15, then view an essay about plans to build a space station from the empty fuel tanks left by shuttle missions. The pinnacle of our triumph in space – the first steps of man on the moon – exists side by side in video form with the tragedy of the Challenger disaster, the almost emotionless voice of the live NASA commentator providing a chilling counterpoint to the horrible spectacle of the explosion.

In many ways, Americans in Space realizes the often-made promises of CD-ROM. On a single disc, Multicom has assembled a wealth of collectible audio and video. The freeform access to the video clips makes this disk even better than the commercial videotapes available.

There is one limit, which is mainly imposed by the technology. Computer text is most effectively presented in small quantities. Therefore, most of the information in Americans in Space consists of thumbnail descriptions of events. Any individual book about the space program probably contains more raw information than this program. As counter-balance, what books lack – stunning sound and moving pictures – Americans in Space has in plenty.

Whether you choose to systematically work through its interlocking topics and images, or just whistle stop its contents, Americans in Space provides a stimulating voyage of visual discovery.

1 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9 10

Multicom Publishing, Inc.; 1100 Olive Way, Suite 1250, Seattle, WA 98101; (206) 622-5530; IBM PC or compatible (12MHz 386SX or faster); 2MB RAM; SVGA; MS-DOS 3.1 or later; Windows 3.1; MPC-compatible CD-ROM drive; $69.95

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DR. T'S SING-A-LONG

By Wayne Kawamoto

Kids just love to sing. Give them half a chance, and they'll croon like Sinatra or ham it up like Midler. Get brave and hand them a microphone, and they'll warble like an off-key Tom Jones. Today's aspiring vocalists have Disney SingAlong Songs on video, Raffi on CD, Wee Sing on tape, and, now, Dr. T's Sing-A-Long on the PC.

That means even more ways for them to rock your house.

Kids can sing with old favorites when Dr. T's Sing-A-Long is on the PC.

SING ALONG WITH MITCH

Dr. T's Sing-A-Long provides a song's instrumentals; your kids provide the voice. This program displays and highlights the words and musical notation (just follow the bouncing ball) as it plays its 26 traditional kids' songs, which range from "Baa Baa Black Sheep" and "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" to "I've Been Working on the Railroad" and "Old McDonald."

Everything works in an animated and interactive Windows environment. As each song plays, Sing-A-Long flashes pictures and animation to act out the song. It's not as exciting as watching Disney SingAlong Songs on video (what is?), but kids find it a lot of fun.

To secure your PC against accidental file deletions, the program offers a kids' interface that occupies the whole screen. Icons identify each song, and when your child selects one, the program plays the first bar as additional identification. From there, kids can click again to play the entire song. This interface is easy to use, and younger kids (ages four and up) have no problems making sense of it. Other nice touches include the rabbit and turtle icons that speed up or slow down the song's tempo.

Unfortunately, Sing-A-Long fires up its songs without any introduction, or even a starting note. Kids have to listen to the first few notes, then jump in late. It would be better if they could begin with the song, perhaps after a couple of introductory bars.

KARAOKE FOR KIDDIES

But if the PC just plays background music while it shows animation and words, what can it offer that video or audio tapes can't? Plenty of things, at least when you think of a properly equipped PC as a karaoke machine. Then you're talking (or singing).

The documentation explains how to use Dr. T's Sing-A-Long and a PC as a kid's karaoke machine – kids can sing along and listen as their voice is mixed with the background music coming from the speakers. Of course, you need an MPC compliant audio card and a microphone to turn this package into a karaoke box, but the money spent is more than worth it.

The well-written documentation also offers instructions on how to install and operate the program, and devotes a section to explaining music fundamentals, a real waste of space. To learn music, you'll want to refer kids to music books, not this material.

Although the PC sing-along concept is relatively new, Dr. T's has competition in Sirius Publishing's line of PC Karaoke products on CD-ROM. At press time, Sirius was work-

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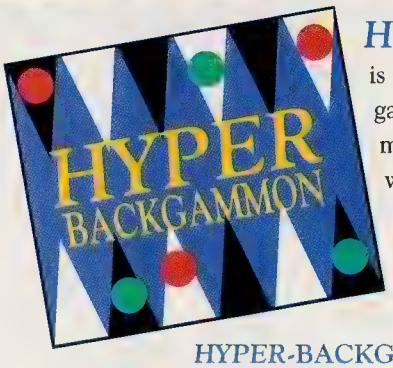
Not Just Another Roll Of The Dice



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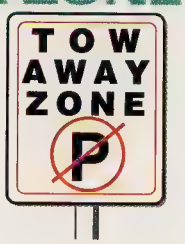

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ing on its upcoming Kid's Karaoke, which will play popular children's songs and accept the company's add-on disks, giving the kids more songs to sing.

The music in Dr. T's comes through your audio board and sounds good, but the instrumentation is limited – the program really just plays the melody. Sirius' PC Karaoke, on the other hand, features fully orchestrated CD-audio music, complete with backup vocals. It's true karaoke, blending voice and a great soundtrack. PC Karaoke also plays the licensing game, going for songs from movies and CDs while Sing-a-Long sticks to oldies like "Twinkle Twinkle, Little Star" and "Itsy Bitsy Spider." Guess which kids would rather hum?

At curtain call, Dr. T's Sing-A-Long is a great idea that does deliver the goods, helping kids learn a bit of music's fundamentals and reinforcing music reading skills. But it leaves room for improvements, especially in light of what the competition offers.

Kids, especially those between the ages of three and ten, will get a kick out of Sing-A-Long, but if you're looking for the best in the sing-at-home business, look elsewhere.

1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10

Dr. T's Music Software; 124 Crescent Road, Needham, MA 02194, (617) 455-1454; IBM PC or compatible; 3MB RAM; EGA/VGA; Windows 3.1; supports AdLib ProAudio Spectrum, and SoundBlaster; mouse required; $24.95

SPACE HULK

By Peter Olafson

It wasn't just a yell I heard way down that shadowed corridor. Had it been just a yell, I would have shrugged it off as background noise, like the rest of the atmospheric sounds – the hiss of steam, the crackle of out-of-whack electric wires, the rumble of empty alien tummies – that fill Electronic Arts' Space Hulk.

But this, this was a shriek. This was the sound of a creature that had been awakened from a sound sleep to inexpressibly bad news, and which was determined to exercise its rage on the nearest breakable object: moi. It didn't come from the head, but from the soul.

The same might be said for Space Hulk in general. This slow-burn three-dimensional science fiction action game from EA's increasingly-active English wing – a conversion from Games Workshop's board game – is basically a multi-player game for one player, a computer rendition of that horrendous space mission from *Aliens*. You're in charge of one or two squads (each consisting of up to five marines) charged with exterminating the Genestealers hiding in and roaming about abandoned spacecraft.

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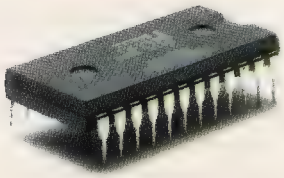

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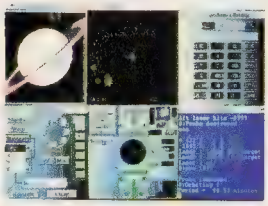

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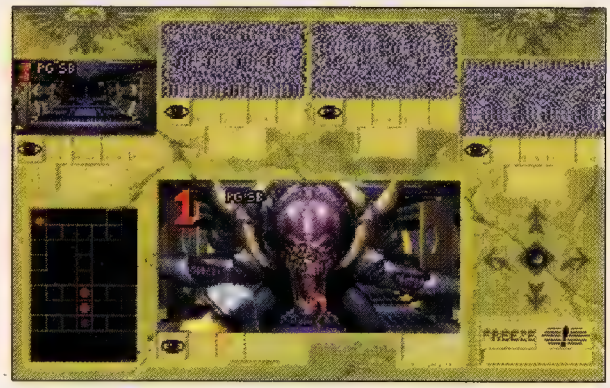
TERMINATE – WITH EXTREME PREJUDICE

The atmosphere's laid on with a trowel. You can almost feel the enemy out there in the darkness, and I'll guarantee that you'll jump at least once in surprise at some innocent sound effect. The screams that signal the Genestealers' approach are unnerving – it's teeth-gritting time – and they'll invariably find you before you find them. Even though you're sometimes forewarned by the rapidly-advancing red circles on your scanner, these creatures will still shamble down corridors in a hall-filling fashion not dissimilar to certain other oblong-headed alien critters well-supplied in teeth and claws. And then there are the times when they come straight through ordinary-looking walls in ambush. Holy Sigourney Weaver!

How did Space Hulk's designers bring this off? Very cleanly and efficiently. The concept's a bit similar to that in Team Yankee. In "overwatch" mode, with four viewscreens arrayed about the top of a central active screen, you see what all five marines see at any given time, and fire each trooper's weapon as well. Only the active terminator can be moved while in this mode, though a click of the right mouse button on any of the subscreens swaps it with the main viewscreen.

You can, however, move the squad en masse by plotting maneuvers on a separate planning screen, where the necessary assignments for cover fire become apparent with an overhead view. It's not the first thing you'll do, but you'll want to pick it up. Movement's a hybrid of the square-to-square shuffle and scrolling (which makes the former appear continuous), and there's a definite kick in switching back to 3-D mode to hear the traditional digitized exhortation to ultra-violence and watch your guys split off from the pack to assume their positions – a nice, momentary illusion of playing with four other people.

Space Hulk's very easy to navigate and operate, enough so that the rules become more an afterthought than anything. A Freeze! gadget stops the game's real-time flow so you can plan your moves (but only for so long). A right-click on the scanner display brings up the move-planning screen. And that move-planning screen has all sorts of gadgets and widgets in one corner, but you figure them out without even reading the manual, which is pleasantly to-the-point when you do turn to it.



Three screens full of static, and one mad Genestealer in your face. Space Hulk is creepy, chaotic and, in the end, compelling.

BURN 'EM, BABY

If all goes well, there's always another set of creepy-crawlies to be burned down in another dark and forbidding place. If it doesn't go well you can return later, since all but the most difficult of Space Hulk's many missions are standalones. And if things slide toward chaos – and things will often go exactly like the unfortunate assault in *Aliens* – you'll see rushes of claws and teeth and helmets spattered with blood. And find yourself looking soberly at five static-filled viewscreens.

Space Hulk isn't irreproachable, though. Hand-to-hand combat, for instance, has been slighted. If you can't shoot it down at a distance, you're probably not going to shoot it down at all. If the marine in question has the right weapon, hand-to-hand is automatic; if he doesn't, he's dead meat. The designers might at least have added the ability to drop to the floor to give a marine behind you a clear shot.

You'll also need to be meticulous with the mouse on the move-planning screen. There's little difference between the click that switches the active terminator and the click that assigns a terminator a destination square containing another trooper. It's too easy to do the latter when you intend the former. Since you have only a limited period to set up moves, this kind of mistake can be deadly.

And Space Hulk doesn't achieve a sense of continuity until you're well along in the game. This changes only in the 18-mission Deathwing campaign, which is the pinnacle of the Space Hulk art form. Here you're able to choose your squads and weapons, and experience is gained from mission to mission and death is permanent.

Apart from that, about the worst thing one can say about Space Hulk is that bits of it are a bit...well, a bit strange. There's an odd, quasi-religious fervor to the mission intros that don't sit right, and the digitized title tune's an inappropriately blustery, macho-adrenaline ditty: "Get outta my way/I can do anything."

Not yet I can't. But I'm working on it.

1 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9 10

Electronic Arts; 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404; (800) 245-4525; IBM PC or compatible, 640K RAM; VGA; DOS 2.01 or later; supports AdLib, SoundBlaster and SoundBlaster Pro; $59.95

CONQUER FOR WINDOWS

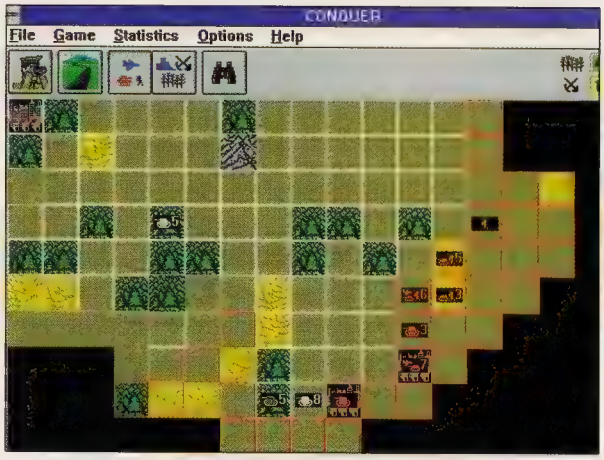
By Wayne Kawamoto

Déjà vu. This game is like walking into a room that you've never been in, but you're sure you've seen it before. Somewhere, someplace, perhaps in another life, I've played and enjoyed Elpin System's Conquer for

Windows, though I'd never cast eyes on it until a couple of week ago. This strategic game of military conquest is compelling and entertaining, but the inspiration is oh-so-obvious.

SON OF ANNIHILATION

Conquer for Windows is a strategy game of annihilation. You exterminate your opponents by capturing cities, land, and pieces on a board – in essence, winning control over the known world. At first impression, Conquer looks virtually identical to New World Computing's Empire Deluxe, except that it runs within Windows. A closer look, though, shows that Conquer is a simpler version, one that's easier to learn and play. Conquer also makes use of land for farming and mining purposes, something Empire neglects, and adds head-to-head modem and network play. The result is a strategy game that's slightly different, but one that effectively stands on its own.



Conquer for Windows offers entertaining strategic game play that's more than just reminiscent of Empire Deluxe.

Throughout Conquer for Windows, each player takes turns moving pieces to capture territory, attack enemy forces, and control the production of armaments. The game features elemental pieces – infantry, tanks, planes and ships – that you move through Conquer's on-screen board.

As you'd expect, there's a hierarchy among the pieces. Each can move a certain distance per turn, each has its own defensive and offensive ratings in battle, each takes a different amount of time to build. To attack, you merely move your piece, or combination of pieces, into an area where your opponent's forces reside. The computer determines the outcome of the skirmish depending on the attack and defense ratings, along with a few random variables.

The paramount departure from Empire Deluxe is that Conquer emphasizes the capture and use of land. Here you claim the good earth by merely moving your pieces onto a parcel; the game's grids change to your designated color. Land is valuable, as it provides food and raw materials to fuel your war machine. If you run out of food or materials, production in your cities comes to a standstill. Thus, in Conquer, you can effectively choke your opponent by taking his land, and consequently the means he's using to support his military infrastructure. He can, of course, do the same to you.

To counter an aggressive opponent who's laying waste to your towns, you can build cities (though the process takes a long 20 turns when you start from scratch). The more municipalities you have, the greater your production of military might, and the greater your consumption of food and raw materials.

WORLD CONQUEST MADE SIMPLE

Conquer is somewhat easier to learn than Empire Deluxe, for this game has only five different pieces, which you can only move, stack (combine them into more powerful groups with cumulative offensive and defensive ratings), and use to attack and capture enemy territory. As in Empire Deluxe, you can use a variety of strategies and approaches to accomplish your goal. During a campaign, some players will shore up their defenses, while others will play the aggressor, mounting constant attacks.

Although it's hard to match the challenge of a real human opponent, Conquer's artificial intelligence puts up a good fight in ten levels of difficulty. You won't have problems waxing the computer in levels one through six, but at level seven, the games get considerably tougher. You can thank the game's developers for the challenge. At higher levels, the computer has a head start, which explains how your opponent can attack from the air when you're still producing your second tank.

Conquer's graphics are colorful and its screens are attractive. The interface is easy to use, the documentation is clear and well written, and you get a tutorial to jumpstart your military career. The game also offers sound effects and music. Since the program runs in Windows, though, you'll have to install Windows' multimedia extensions to hear the WAV files.

Conquer for Windows is an involving and entertaining strategy game, one that should appeal most to newcomers, not the hardcore player eager for the ultimate challenge. It may make you think you're reliving a past life, but in this case, that past life ain't all that bad.

1 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9 10

Elpin Systems; 45 South Park Victoria, Suite 401, Milpitas, CA 95035; (408) 956-0720; IBM PC or compatible (386 or faster); 4MB RAM; VGA; Windows 3.1 or later; supports SoundBlaster, ProAudio Spectrum and Microsoft Sound System; requires 4MB hard-disk space; mouse required; supports Windows for Workgroups and NetBIOS networks; $69.95

CLASH OF STEEL

By Joe Hutsko

If war is hell, it's a complicated hell. All those men to maneuver, tanks to drive and planes to fly. No wonder generals have more furrows on their foreheads than an Iowa cornfield.

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Circle 131 on Reader Service Card

Continued from page 71

Maybe you wanted to try your hand at a PC war game, but you've been spooked by the genre's inherent complexity. If that's the case, SSI's latest, Clash of Steel, may prove to be your ticket. Containing one complete campaign and six scenarios that add up to more than 60 hours of play time, Clash of Steel lets you revisit the entire European Theater of World War II in all its detailed eminence without taxing your patience.

BE AN IMPULSIVE GENERAL

True to the traditional paper-map, cardboard-counter and roll-of-the-die-based war games that inspired it, Clash of Steel offers an eye-in-the-sky view of each involved country and territory, from Ireland in the west and Russia in the east to Norway in the north and North Africa in the south. At the start, you take the role of either Axis or Allies in 1939, when Germany's poised to attack Poland.

The main screen shows a tactical section of the overall board, and you can easily move from zone to zone or bring up the entire playing field with the mouse. Combat forces – which include land, air and navel units – appear as individual squares, each color-coded to represent its allegiance. Apparent at a glance are each unit's strength and action points available per move, which make for uncomplicated strategic planning and deployment. Clash of Steel's graphics and use of color are agreeable, although they feel more like EGA than VGA.

A push-button interface makes Clash of Steel a good pick for beginning war gamers. And its multiple levels of difficulty make it a challenge for seasoned players, too.

As in any war-time simulation, the action of the game lies in managing and deploying your units to build power, destroy enemies, minimize your losses and take the opposition's territory. Played in bimonthly turns, Clash of Steel divides those turns into a series of impulses. The computer first calculates production values for both sides, then during your turn – the second round of impulses – you make your moves.

The first two impulses of each turn are dedicated to production tasks, navy moves, amphibious invasions, reserve movement and assigning new units. The Assault option initiates ground combat, and lets you select adjacent friendly units to help you in your attacks against a nearby enemy. The ability to combine units in enemy attacks ups your hit percentage, but leaves other lone units vulnerable to enemy attack. Long-range attacks are possible via Air Strikes and Shore Bombardments, which let you assault enemy units that are up to seven squares away. Elemental conditions such as terrain and weather are also taken into account.

While the temptation to strike and take ground is always high, tactical maneuvers help units increase supplies and production values, which lets you buy additional land, air and naval units. Research points can be allocated among different products, such as jet planes or rockets. And when combat's finally joined, sound effects – including bombs and machine-gun fire – add a bit of spice to the action of the game.

When the computer takes it turn, things can get confusing as enemy pieces quickly slide here and there on the screen, and brutally attack your commands. Fortunately, you can choose to play the game impulse-by-impulse, which lets you click through each turn that the computer takes one step at a time, giving you plenty of time to read status screens and interpret the effects of both your moves and your enemy's.

Certain cast-in-stone rules apply when specific maneuvers follow historical events. If the Axis player, for example, declares war on Benelux in 1940 and the weather is clear, then the Allied units suffer under Blitzkrieg. The end of the war must generally follow history, too, for the Allied player wins when Germany and Italy are conquered, and an Axis player wins if England and Russia are taken. (Otherwise, the game ends after the July/August 1945 turn.)

A GOOD WAR FOR GREENHORNS

Clash of Steel proves a worthy introduction to war games. Its clean, easy-to-use interface makes it particularly painless for beginners struggling to carry out maneuvers and manage units.

A longer and more involved tutorial would have been helpful to rookies, and some knowledge of World War II will undoubtedly make the game a more enjoyable simulation. The supplied Historical Timeline comes in handy for staying on track with milestones based on places and events, though you may want to check out a good book from the library to brush up on what, how and when events went down.

Seasoned players should not pass by Clash of Steel: With its multiple levels of difficulty and attention to historical details, it serves up a compelling look at a long-ago war that's playable long into the future.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9 10

Strategic Simulations, Inc.; 675 Almanor Avenue, Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086; (408) 737-6800; IBM PC or compatible; 2MB RAM (4MB recommended); VGA; supports SoundBlaster and SoundBlaster Pro; mouse recommended; $69.95

THE TERMINATOR 2029 AND OPERATION SCOUR MISSION EXPANSION DISK

By Brad Dixon

Your physique may be more Woody Allen than Arnold Schwartzenegger, but with the PC – today's great equalizer – you can pretend you're the Terminator easier than making believe you're a neurotic New Yorker.

All it takes is a copy of Bethesda's The Terminator 2029 and its accompanying add-on disk, Operation Scour. Rather than Arnie inside the exoskeleton armor of a Terminator robot, you're inside its skin, trying to rid the world of the vicious machine intelligence, Skynet. The year is 2029. The action is spine-tingling. And this game is an adrenaline rush of the highest order.

Terminator 2029's HUD-style interface puts a first-person point of view on your PC's screen.

TERMINATORS IN YOUR FACE

When T2029 opens, you're in Resistance HQ, ready to define your character and call sign. Here, too, you can check out your enemy's weapons and customize keys for your own command sequences.

Take on the Training Simulator to acquaint yourself with the various weapons on board the ACE 1000A, the Terminator prototype that the Resistance has obtained. Time in the simulator is well spent when you realize how tenacious the Terminators, Dragons and other automated opponents can be. Practice using the fusion grenades and phased plasma cannons until you know what you're doing.

In the Briefing Room you meet Colonel John Connor and learn about the first level's primary and secondary missions. From there, you move to the ACE Ordinance Bay where you attach plasma cannons, fusion grenade launchers, and later, a variety of lethal missiles, to the Terminator's six hard points. On the defensive side, you can equip the ACE 1000A with an autoDoc unit that administers first aid if the robot's shielding is breached.

Once in the battle zone, action gets hot and heavy. The Heads Up Display (HUD) in the ACE 1000A dominates the screen, with all kinds of information shown, from active weapons systems to a status readout of the ACE 1000A. Additional displays put up a navigational map and a weapons targeting grid.

As you move across the countryside toward your mission objectives, the enemy first appears on this targeting grid, then into your line of sight. By moving the crosshairs of your targeting system with the mouse, you aim and fire, with sound effects sizzling out of your PC as plasma fire streaks toward its target. If the plasma cannon doesn't do the trick, launch a round of fusion grenades toward those Skynet Terminators to turn the evil metal heads into iron filings.

With some practice, perseverance, patience and a lot of saved games, you'll rise through the ranks of the Resistance. Gaining praise and glory along the way, you're soon granted the privilege of using newer and more lethal weapons designed for you and the ACE 1000A.

OPERATION SCOUR

When you've exhausted the play in T2029, turn to Operation Scour, the game's first mission expansion disk. In this ten-mission add-on, Skynet's Orbital Satellite Platform has been destroyed and Col. Connor has ordered a systematic clean-up of the remaining Terminators. You and the ACE 1000A have been reassigned to a base beneath Washington D.C., where you'll hunt down the renegade Terminators. Unfortunately, it's no mop-up mission, for Skynet's end-game programming called for the manufacture and dispersal of a whole new batch of super-lethal Terminators for you to battle.

In Operation Scour, you defend the Resistance Headquarters, protect vital information, and cleanse the countryside of deadly new Terminators. You can equip the ACE 1000A with a new generation of ultra-powerful weapons, from self-targeting missiles to a new array of fusion grenades.

The action in both T2029 and its add-on operations is non-stop, with sound card support that draws you right into the battle and fast animation that – though not spectacular – is more than adequate for the ongoing arcade sequences. One of my few complaints is that T2029 is a storage hog, for it takes up almost 14MB of disk space.

For the arcade gamer, T2029 and Operation Scour provide enough challenge to occupy those long, winter nights. It may not last you until the real year 2029, but it's the only way I know to turn myself into an Arnie, not a Woody.

1 2 3 4 5 6 **7** 8 9 10

Bethesda Softworks; 1370 Piccard Drive, Rockville, MD 20850-4304; (301) 926-8300; IBM PC or compatible (286 or faster, 20MHz 386 recommended) 2MB RAM; VGA/MCGA; supports Roland and SoundBlaster; $69.95 (T2029), $29.95 (Operation Scour)

Continued on page 78

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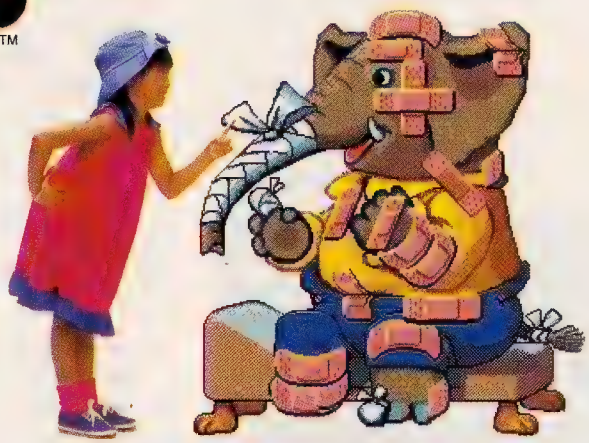

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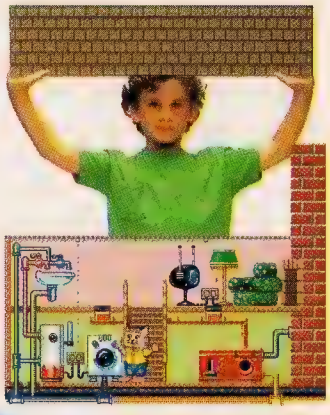

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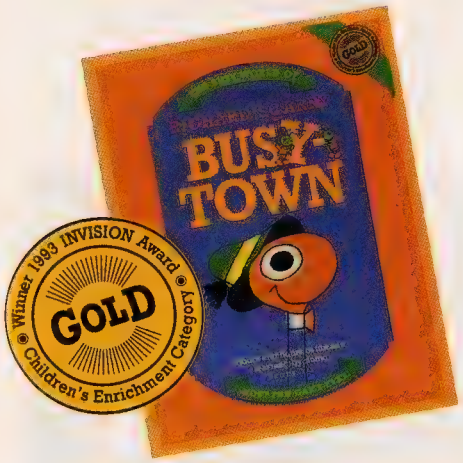

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PC COMPATIBLES: 286 or higher (386 or higher recommended) 640 K RAM. Hard disk (12 MB for full install, 6 MB for partial). MS DOS 3.3 or higher. Mouse. Speakers. Soundboards: Sound Blaster, Sound Blaster Pro, Pro Audio Spectrum, Adlib, Tandy 3 or Disney Sound Source. CD ROM version requires CD ROM Drive.

Circle 143 on Reader Service Card

Paramount Interactive

Continued from page 75

WAR IN THE GULF

By Joe Hutsko

My conclusion? Tanks are hell.

Since I've never commanded an armored fighting vehicle – tanks to you war rookies – I can only suppose that the frustration you'll experience playing Empire's War in the Gulf is perhaps its most authentic innovation. If your idea of warfare is the quick-response, pit-of-your-stomach speed that the latest jet fighter simulations serve up, this game will feel, by comparison, like wading in molasses. That's not a complaint, but merely par for the slowed-down course when you're fighting with tanks. A good thing, too, for keeping track of just one unit is hard enough, let alone the four this quasi-sim makes you command.

AIM LOW

Unlike most computer wargames, War in the Gulf has you working the action from the ground, not from some eye-in-the-sky map viewpoint. The setting – 1995, Kuwait, Iraqi Republican Guard opponents – is a reprise of Desert Storm, though this time you're in charge, not Schwartzkopf. With your four units of four tanks each, you're to stop the Iraqis one region, or campaign, at a time.

You learn how to handle your heavy metal with the supplied practice scenario. Tracking your battalions is half the challenge, but identifying tanks – the enemies and your own – is even more crucial, if only because they all sport sand-colored camouflage. The first few times you play you'll probably lose a few vehicles to friendly fire, for instinct tells you to fire first, ask questions later. Suppress that quick reaction in War in the Gulf, for if the Iraqis don't wipe you out, your own government will, informing you that you're unsuitable for fighting until you've gotten in more practice.

What you see depends on the view you choose. Before a new campaign or practice session, you're shown an overhead map of the area you're assigned, and a notebook that contains a briefing and other intelligence information about your mission. Highlighted on the map are key targets, roads and villages of military significance, and the battle areas, where encounters take place. Once you clear one of these zones, you move on to the next. Clear them all and you're promoted and ready for the next campaign.

Through its four tiled windows, the battle screen gives you a 3-D straight-ahead view of each unit, though you can easily choose a full-screen perspective of any of the four for a clearer picture. Controls in each unit's window operate independently, so you can rotate gun turrets, toggle between a unit's straight-ahead view or an overhead map view to get your bearing, and fire away. Watch out, though: If you spend too much time with any one unit, you'll leave the other tanks as sitting ducks.

Tracking battalions and identifying tanks in multiple views isn't easy when you climb inside the tanks in War in the Gulf.

IRAQ SAYS TANKS

Your own tanks are equipped with a range of heavy-hitting guns and missiles, but since most platoons don't have all weapon types available (the M1 tank doesn't carry TOW anti-tank missiles, for instance), it's important to arrange your units in a complementary formation. Smoke grenades obscure your enemies vision, while the laser range finder helps you lock-on on to targets. Overall, combat is fairly realistic, with reloading times built into the game.

Don't forget that your mission goal isn't just to nail enemy tanks, but to take out certain buildings, too. Among these targets are satellite dishes, radar towers, communications aerials, factories, and fuel dumps. Every object you destroy has an effect on your balance sheet. (You thought war was free?) Destroy the wrong building, a mosque perhaps, and you'll pay a fine. Go broke and you're pulled from the campaign.

Graphics in the 3-D view are blocky and sometimes shaky, the latter partly due to the fact that you're bouncing over rough terrain in the simulation. Geometric buildings break apart when hit, and done-in tanks halt to a flaming standstill. Still, the graphics aren't dazzling. Faster PCs make for a smoother and more stimulating simulation. And the game's sound is weak, mostly rumbles and crackling booms, but none of the screaming missile effects you might expect.

All told, War in the Gulf's acceptable graphics, liberal play options, and thorough manual provide for a combo strategy-action game that's reasonably entertaining, reasonably realistic.

If you want to climb into a tank driver's seat, check out War in the Gulf. But don't come complaining to me when you find out that tanks are hell. I warned you, didn't I?

1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10

ReadySoft; 30 Wertheim Court, Suite 2, Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada L4B 1B9; (416) 731-4175; IBM PC or compatible; EGA/VGA; 550K RAM free; mouse recommended; $49.95

ASHES OF EMPIRE

By Ed Ferrell

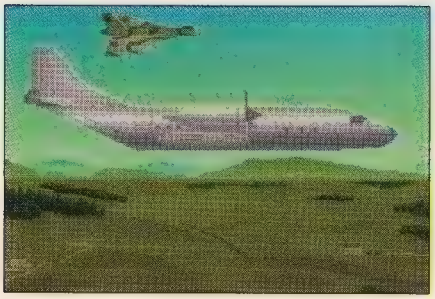
Yugoslavia splinters into a million pieces, the Eastern Bloc argues about who controls the former Soviet nuclear arsenal, and the hard realities of economic chaos send everyone begging for aid.

Who's going to put Humpty Dumpty together again? In Gametek's Ashes of Empire, you do. This unusual strategy game, which models the political and economic tasks facing a fractured land, emphasizes the adventure of diplomacy on one hand, and the challenge of commanding military forces on the other.

Ashes of Empire may not do everything – it may not even do right those things it attempts – but it's interesting enough to be worth a look by strategy game aficionados.

BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO

Based on the recent events in Eastern Europe, this strategic adventure plunges you into the remnants of a superpower that's not only fragmented, but faced with all-out war. You must fly in, gain a toehold, and try to assuage the fears of your former foes. Pockets of military power exist, and until you know who has what, it's best to be nice to everybody.



A flying headquarters provides a high-tech communications system in Ashes of Empire.

Though steeped in the frightful possibilities of the Cold War meltdown, Ashes of Empire is still futuristic make-believe. Even the names have been changed to protect the innocent. As Special Commissioner of the United Community, you must stabilize a country by meeting people's need for food, clothing, fuel and weapons. Once peace is established, you bank off your success and tackle the next country.

Information screens display surpluses and shortages of vital goods and equipment. Different cities have radar, hospitals, mines, and refineries. You must make peaceful contact with the appropriate people to get wary warriors to work together, and produce their own supplies. You have a variety of ways to win over the people. You can simply fill their needs from your supplies (expensive), or charm them into an alliance with the United Community (not easy). If your charm doesn't work, there are various shades of intimidation, from strong talk to strong arm.

THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB

It isn't all diplomacy, and you won't spend all your time delivering blankets and bandages. You also command forces composed of over 21 different military units, from jet fighters to tanks to submarines.

A futuristic flight simulator constitutes your flying command headquarters, and confronts you with all the challenges of a typical flight sim. You'll have to be a Renaissance man to handle all aspects of this game as you blend seat-of-the-pants flying with tough politics and sound economics. The mix is strange, and doesn't always work.

The political situation in this game is chaotic, but with headlines like they are today, entirely plausible. And, that's the best thing about Ashes – its plausibility. Everything else – the strange mix of flight simulator with economics and diplomacy – is iffy at best. But with a niche all to itself, Ashes is the best way to safely sample the feel and flavor of today's fragile world.

1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7 8 9 10

Gametek; 2999 N.E 191 Street, Suite 800, North Miami Beach, FL 33180; (305) 935-3995; IBM PC or compatible; 640K RAM; VGA/MCGA; DOS 3.0 or later; supports Roland and SoundBlaster; $59.99

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THE LOST VIKINGS

By Joe Hutsko

Fourteen years. That's a long time between grab-'em-by-the-throat action adventure games. Back in the Carter years – remember him? Southern governor who jogged, big smile, had a crazy brother? – it was **Castle Wolfenstein** on an Apple II. This time around, with Clinton at the helm – Southern governor who jogs, big smile, has a crazy brother? – it's Interplay's **The Lost Vikings.**

Some things, like politics and terrific games, never change....

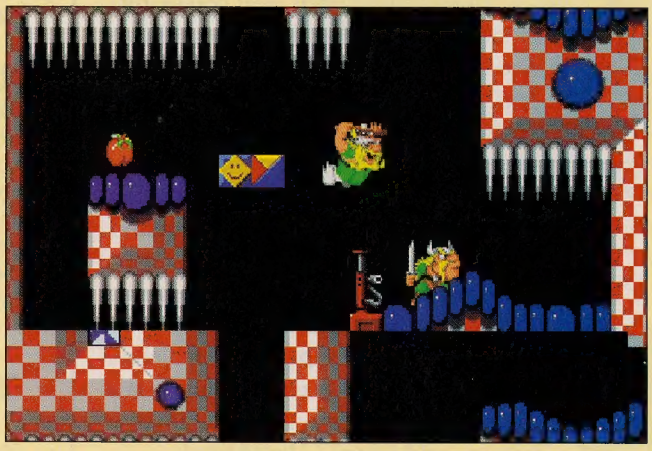
TEAMWORK IS EVERYTHING

The Lost Vikings is more than just another run-jump-shoot game. Instead of one main character, you handle three: Erik the Swift, Baleog the Fierce, and Olaf the Stout. Each is true to his name, for Erik is fast and jumps high, Baleog's agile with sword and bow, and Olaf, well, he's just plain fat, willing, and able to protect the other two with his heavy shield. Olaf's shield also acts as a flotation device when he holds it over his head, and makes for smoother descents from high places. If that's not enough, it serves as a makeshift platform that lets Erik leap to higher ground.

These three are a team. That's the whole point to The Lost Vikings, for you've got to play their individual talents off one another so that they can make their way through 37 levels of way-out, futuristic, and wildly entertaining obstacles.

Describing how The Lost Vikings plays is more complicated than the game itself. You control only one Viking at a time, moving him with the cursor keys and controlling his special ability – Erik leaps, Olaf raises his shield, Baleog's slashes his sword – with the space bar. Press the D key to make your Viking perform his second special move, whether that's Erik's wall-smashing head butt, or Baleog's archery.

When you start a level, it's usually best to make Olaf point. As he ventures off, the others stay behind – often several screens behind. His shield raised, Olaf is generally safe, but when he confronts his first obstacle – a venom-spitting scorpion, say – it's time to switch to Baleog. Hit the Ctrl key and the screen rewinds to the other Vikings. Once Baleog catches up to Olaf, he fires arrows at the scorpion to clear the way. A deep chasm calls for Erik. Hit the switch, bring up Erik, then leap him across the chasm. Once on the other side, maybe he'll find a key to unlock a door or drop a bridge to let the other pair through. And so on, and so on, and so on.



Crossing bridges or scaling heights in The Lost Vikings requires imagination, planning and tons of teamwork.

While this might sound cumbersome and confusing, it actually takes less than 15 minutes to feel like a pro at the game's controls. Credit the clever coaching for much of the fast learning, for during the first few levels, dialog boxes pop up now and again to tell you what actions your Vikings must perform in order to clear the level and reach the exit. By the fifth level or so, you've learned everything you need to know about making your men work together.

PERSONALITY PLUS

None of this action would be half so fascinating without the Vikings themselves and each man's endearing character traits. As the diligent Olaf holds back a foe while you try to decide on a move, Baleog flashes you an ear-to-ear grin and starts showing off his muscles. Erik, meanwhile, looks bored and kneels down with an impatient huff to tie his shoe.

Add beautifully drawn animations, spectacular color and sound, and a great musical score that changes with each level, and you've got a multimedia experience that beats Nintendo any day.

Although it's properly categorized as an action game, The Lost Vikings is rarely fast, at least in the Super Mario or Sonic the Hedgehog sense of the word. That's good. Instead, The Lost Vikings is like a splendid collection of lively, enchanting puzzles, whose solutions lie in the dogged efforts of three marvelously different, uniquely capable characters. ❑

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 **10**

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